From Naturalism to Decadence: The Novels of Edmond de Goncourt

Katherine Ashley

PhD
The University of Edinburgh
February 2002

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to provide a coherent study of Edmond de Goncourt's four solo novels - *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882), and *Chérie* (1884) - in terms of the overlap between naturalism and decadence and the changing literary field of late nineteenth-century France. The thesis approaches Goncourt's solo novels as novels in their own right rather than simply as extensions of the joint oeuvre of the Goncourt brothers.

The first chapter, as well as providing an overview of the state of Goncourtian studies, furnishes background information on the joint writings of the Goncourt brothers and on the various literary movements of the nineteenth century that influenced them and that they, in turn, shaped. The second chapter is devoted to paratexts and demonstrates, in the first instance, how the title changes of the joint and solo novels offer insights into Edmond de Goncourt's evolving literary aesthetic. The chapter then moves on to a detailed analysis of the prefaces to Edmond de Goncourt's novels and argues that Goncourt used the prefaces to simultaneously establish his authority as the founder of naturalism and to distance himself from the movement through presenting his solo novels as initiating a new mode of literature.

The third chapter studies the concept of the 'document humain' and its role in the process of literary creation in Edmond de Goncourt's novels. The chapter makes use of archival material - the Goncourt correspondence - and begins with a discussion of the (changing) nature of the document, drawing on examples from *La Fille Élisa*. It then enters into a textual analysis of the three final novels and argues that, while a naturalist documentary apparatus is retained by Goncourt, the thematic ends to which this documentary process is used show abstract affinities with the decadent movement.

The fourth chapter focuses on the style of the novels and examines how it relates to the literary transformations underway during the fin-de-siècle. After briefly introducing the concept of 'écriture artiste', the chapter explores issues surrounding plot development and looks at the implications of Edmond de Goncourt's wish to free his novels from the domination of plot. A third section studies the functions of dialogue and silence in the novels and argues that the novels present transactional communication as an impossibility. The fourth section considers the manner in which the characters in the novels attempt to transcend the verbal and find alternative modes of artistic expression. A final section, dealing with vocabulary, explores how the lexical virtuosity of the novels is used to both utilitarian and purely aesthetic ends.

Table of Contents

I declare that this thesis has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

A modified version of chapter 3 D, 'Female Documents in *Chérie*', will appear in *Arachnofiles: A Journal of European Languages and Cultures*, 2 (2001) (www.selc.ed.ac.uk/arachnofiles) with the title 'Palimpsest: Female Documents in *Chérie*'.

A modified version of chapter 2 B, 'Paratexts: Prefaces' has been published as 'Authority and Intertext in the Goncourt Prefaces', *Trivium* 32 (2000), 59-72.

List of Abbreviations

Correspondence:

Gustave Flaubert-Les Goncourt: Correspondance, ed. by Pierre-Jean Dufief (Paris: Flammarion, 1998). This will be abbreviated as *Corres. Flaub-Gonc* and referenced in the body of the thesis using a letter number, date, and page format.

Correspondance Edmond de Goncourt et Alphonse Daudet, ed. by Pierre-Jean and Anne-Simone Dufief (Geneva: Droz, 1996). This will be abbreviated as *Corres. Gonc-Daud* and referenced in the body of the thesis using a letter number, date, and page format.

J.-K. Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Edmond de Goncourt*, ed. by Pierre Lambert and Pierre Cogny (Paris: Nizet, 1956). This will be abbreviated as *Corres. Huys-Gonc* and referenced in the body of the thesis using a letter number, date, and page format.

Journal:

Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. by Robert Ricatte, Bouquins, 3 vols (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989) will be abbreviated as *Journal* and referenced in the body of the thesis. References will follow a date, volume, and page format.

Other:

References to the *Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* will be abbreviated as *Les Cahiers Goncourt.*

References to the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises will be abbreviated B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F.

Introduction

This thesis hopes to redress the balance that generalising interpretations have had on Edmond de Goncourt's novels. It will not consider *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882) and *Chérie* (1884) as merely extensions of the oeuvre of the Goncourt Brothers, but will instead adopt an historical approach that concentrates on the aesthetic repositioning of the elder Goncourt after his brother's death in 1870. For, in addition to contributing to the establishment and consecration of the Naturalist movement jointly with his brother, Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels play a significant role in the development of the Decadent aesthetic of the late nineteenth century, both through their style and through the themes they portray.

The opening chapter will clarify the terminology that will be employed in this thesis and will provide a literature review that analyses how the joint and solo novels of the Goncourts have been interpreted. It is hoped that this review will establish why there is a need to look at Edmond de Goncourt's novelistic output as independent from the novels of the Goncourt Brothers.

A discussion of paratextual elements in chapter two will show how even in peripheral writings there is evidence of an aesthetic realignment away from Naturalism. The chapter will show how hidden changes in the titles, both pre- and post-1870, are indicative of an aesthetic evolution in the works of the elder Goncourt. Likewise, the prefaces to Edmond de Goncourt's four novels offer open discussions of the nature of literary evolution. The prefaces indicate that Goncourt was aware of the workings of the literary field, and this makes his paratextual writings that much more important in an analysis of the move from Naturalism to Decadence in the four novels. The prefaces, I will argue, actively participate in the formation of literary history.

After establishing Edmond de Goncourt's views on the evolution of the literary field, the thesis will move to a consideration of the so-called 'document humain'. Chapter three will begin by probing the complexities of the term 'document humain'. It will explore how its purpose changes over time, and will expose how Goncourt's reliance on documentation is related to his earlier vocation as a writer of history. The subsequent chapters will analyse the link between documentation and mimetic representation in the three later novels: *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin*, and *Chérie*. *Les Frères Zemganno* will be studied with particular reference to the issue of autobiography; *La Faustin* will be examined from the perspective of heredity and history; *Chérie* will be approached from the point-of-view of incorporating real-life documents into the text. The aim of each chapter will be to argue that Naturalist methods of literary creation are used to ends that are at times distant from Naturalist doctrines and themes and instead approach Decadence.

The chapters that form the study of particular linguistic features of Edmond de Goncourt's novels are much more varied in their approach to the transition from, and interplay between, Naturalism to Decadence. The first chapter provides a brief overview of the Goncourts' style, known as 'écriture artiste', so as to situate subsequent debates. This is followed by an analysis of the mechanisms by which the novels lay aside intricate elaboration of plot. It focuses primarily on temporal paralysis in narration and description and on the manner in which linear advancement of plot is stalled. The next chapter scrutinises similar occurrences with regard to representations of speech in the novels, and argues that discourse does not contribute to the development of plot, is not associated with action, alienates characters from each other and from their environment, and reveals the inefficacy of verbal language as means of communication. The manner in which vocabulary is both a utilitarian tool for mimetic representation and a device of Decadent experimentation is the subject of the penultimate chapter, which looks at, among other things, archaic lexicons, neologisms, foreign words and the aesthetic necessity

of linguistic instability. It will be demonstrated that Edmond de Goncourt's novels are extremely pessimistic with regard to a positivist conception of language. A final section centres on the way in which the characters in Goncourt's novels themselves eschew written and verbal language as a means of expressing higher artistic truths, and instead experiment with other, alternative modes of aesthetic expression. Ultimately, the concerns of the characters reflect the aesthetic turbulence of the period and act as a mirror to Goncourt's own literary struggles.

Chapter 1
The Goncourtian World Past and Present

In comparison with other authors of the second half of the nineteenth century, such as Zola and Flaubert to name but two, there have been relatively few critical studies of the novels of the Goncourt brothers, regardless of their considerable reputation at the time. As one critic comments, 'on oublie souvent l'influence majeure [des Goncourt] sur la littérature de l'entre-deux-siècles'.[1] What is more, at present no monograph has concentrated exclusively on the solo novels of Edmond de Goncourt, who survived his brother by twenty-six years. More often than not *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882) and *Chérie* (1884) are simply lumped in with the novels of the Goncourt brothers. Few critics distinguish between pre- and post-1870 writings and a significant trend in earlier Goncourt studies was to analyse the novels through biographical essays.[2] Although Edmond de Goncourt's novels were extremely influential at the time of their publication, both in and outwith the borders of France - as the numerous requests for translation demonstrate -[3] few critics devote as much attention to the place of these four novels in the literary field. A notable exception is Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau who considers *La Faustin*, along with *À Rebours* (1884), as a founding text of Decadence, and equates the polemics surrounding the Goncourt brothers' fiction to those surrounding Monet's painting, Wagner's music, and Rodin's sculpture.[4]

---

[1] Philippe Chardin, 'Fins comparées de quelques artistes fictifs de la fin-de-siècle' in *Fins de siècle: terme-évolution-révolution? Actes du congrès de la société française de littérature générale et comparée, Toulouse 22-24 septembre 1987*, ed. by Gwenhaël Ponnau (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1989), pp. 231-9 (p. 231).

[2] André Billy and François Fosca are examples of this trend. *Les Frères Goncourt* (Paris: Flammarion, 1954); *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941).

[3] The Goncourt correspondence is particularly revealing here, containing as it does dozens of letters requesting permission to translate their novels into English, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian, Swedish. For a list of published Spanish translations, see Lola Bermùdez Medina and Claudine Lécrivain, 'Bibliographie: traductions espagnoles (1855-1996) des ouvrages des Goncourt', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 5 (1997), 282-7. Alidor Delzant catalogues foreign language translations of Goncourtian novels held in Edmond de Goncourt's personal library in *Bibliothèque des Goncourt: livres modernes. Vente à Paris, hôtel Drouot, 5-10 avril, 1897* (Paris: Imprimerie de Motteroz, n.d.), pp. 148-9.

[4] *La Tentation du livre sur rien: naturalisme et décadence* (Mont-de-Marsan: Éditions interuniversitaires, 1994), pp. 200 and 175.

A recent revival of interest in the Goncourt brothers, perhaps spawned by the growing interest in the exchanges between the verbal and visual arts in the nineteenth century, in *Kunstliteratur*, is evident in the creation of the 'Société des Amis des frères Goncourt' in 1992 and the subsequent annual publication of *Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*. Though frequently prone to hagiography, the *Cahiers* are a valuable source of *inédits* and information concerning Goncourt studies. Another recent book, a volume of conference papers pertaining to the Goncourts, was published under the title *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture* in 1997, and its wide-ranging critical and theoretical viewpoints deal with the writings of the Goncourts in fiction, history, art, as well as in their *Journal*.[5] A decade earlier, in 1989, the popular *Magazine Littéraire* devoted an issue to the brothers, also covering all aspects of Goncourtian studies.[6] Prior to these developments, there had been a consistent, if limited, curiosity about the authors. However, the *Prix Goncourt* and the continuous relevance of the *Journal: mémoires de la vie littéraire* in the context of lexicography, historical studies of the nineteenth century and its cultural products, as well as in the emerging field of life writing, has kept the names of the brothers in the public domain.[7] Unfortunately for present purposes, the two most comprehensive analyses of the novels of the Goncourt brothers - Robert Ricatte's *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt 1851-1870* and Enzo Caramaschi's *Réalisme et impressionnisme dans l'oeuvre des Frères Goncourt* - largely ignore Edmond de Goncourt's novels.[8] In his study, Ricatte concludes that the Goncourts' novels 'font éclater [...] le cadre du roman'.[9] Ricatte had intended to extend his reach to cover the

---

[5] ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997). Another recent special issue of a journal devoted to the Goncourt brothers and edited by Jean-Louis Cabanès is 'Les Frères Goncourt', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 259 (2000).

[6] 'Les Frères Goncourt: le journal d'un demi-siècle', *Magazine littéraire*, 269 (1989).

[7] Max Fuchs, *Le Lexique du 'Journal des Goncourt': contribution à l'histoire de la langue française pendant la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle* (Paris: É. Cornély, 1912). Pierre Bourdat, 'Les néologismes dans l'oeuvre des Goncourt', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 6 (1998), 18-47 and 'Variations goncourtiennes sur un verbe vulgaire', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 7 (1999-2000), 185-93.

[8] Robert Ricatte, *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt, 1851-1870* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953). Enzo Caramaschi, *Réalisme et impressionnisme dans l'oeuvre des frères Goncourt* (Pisa: Editrice Libreria Goliardica, 1971).

[9] *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 463.

post-1870 novels, but this was never achieved.[10] He instead left a volume entitled *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, which, while providing unquestionably useful material for the study of that novel, does not clarify whether Ricatte thought the rupture established in the Goncourts' joint novels could equally be applied to Edmond's solo works. In this respect, his work is the opposite of many critics: his comments are based on detailed technical analysis and leave little room for generalisation. One frustrating element of Ricatte's work is the fact that it at times draws on sources that are unavailable for general consultation. Nonetheless, this thesis will begin, humbly, where Ricatte left off.

The Goncourt brothers have been associated with several (often conflicting) literary movements and genres. Moreover, while most critics agree that the novels of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt are hybrid, if only because they wrote their works together, there is less agreement as to what constitutes this duality in their writings. Some approach the matter by focusing on the Goncourts' different artistic callings - in addition to being novelists, the Goncourts were historians, biographers, journalists, artists, and diarists - arguing that they overlap and inform each other. There are numerous articles and essays, for example, that deal with the coincidence of literature and art in their novels.[11] Others prefer to focus on the place allotted to them

---

[10] 'On s'étonnera peut-être de la limite que j'ai tracée à l'étude que voici. S'arrêter en 1870, c'est, je le sais, s'interdire momentanément une comparaison intéressante entre les romans des deux frères et ceux du seul Edmond. Mais il fallait contenir dans de raisonnables limites un volume déjà pesant, et se résoudre à retarder la suite qu'il appelle'. *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 10.

[11] Henry Bouillier argues that though the Goncourts failed to see any merit in impressionist painting, their descriptions bear resemblance to the impressionists. *Portraits et miroirs, études sur le portrait dans l'oeuvre de Retz, Saint-Simon, Chateaubriand, Michelet, les Goncourt, Proust, Léon Daudet, Jouhandeau* (Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1979). Thérèse Dolan approaches the matter from a different perspective entirely, and contends that *Manette Salomon* is a literary response to Manet's *Olympia*, 'Musée Goncourt: *Manette Salomon* and the Nude', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 18 (1989-1990), 172-85. A recent study by Bernard Vouilloux, *L'Art des Goncourt: une esthétique du style* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), is altogether more theoretical and technical. See also Patrick O'Donovan's essay for its discussion of *Manette Salomon*, 'Avatars of the artist: narrative approaches to the work of the painter' in *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. by Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 222-36. Benjamin Bart is obstinate that 'impressionism' cannot refer to literature: 'World Views into Style: The Goncourt Brothers and Proust at the Opera', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 15 (1986-1987), 173-88 (p. 175).

in literary history and interpret the novels as belonging to Romantic, Realist, Impressionist, Naturalist or Decadent literary traditions. All of these tags and oppositions are attempting to reconcile the apparent mimetic focus of the novels with their highly individual style.

In the preface to their 1865 novel *Germinie Lacerteux*, the brothers elaborate their theory of the function of the novel and violently break with what had come before:

> Aujourd'hui que le Roman s'élargit et grandit, qu'il commence à être la grande forme sérieuse, passionnée, vivante, de l'étude littéraire et de l'enquête sociale, qu'il devient, par l'analyse et par la recherche psychologique, l'Histoire morale contemporaine, aujourd'hui que le Roman s'est imposé les études et les devoirs de la science, il peut en revendiquer les libertés et les franchises (p. 2).[12]

Science, here, is presented as a reason to extend the boundaries of the novel. One of the chief advances proposed in the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux* is the prominence given to working class subjects, and it is in this respect that the novel breaks with the Realism of, say, Flaubert, whose novels depict middle-class realities, and introduces Naturalism.[13] Erich Auerbach, for one, argues that the Goncourts were in the 'extreme vanguard' with *Germinie Lacerteux*. 'Realism,' he writes, summarising and at the same time clarifying the position, 'had to embrace the whole reality of contemporary civilisation, in which to be sure the bourgeoisie played a dominant role, but in which the masses were beginning to press threateningly ahead'. Moreover, 'the common people in all its ramifications had to be taken into the subject matter of serious realism: the Goncourts were right, and they were to be borne out in it. The development of realistic art has proved it'.[14] Zola stated that *'Germinie Lacerteux*, dans notre littérature contemporaine, est une date' and added that a

[12] Unless otherwise stated in the text, all references to the novels refer to the following edition: *Les Goncourt: oeuvres romanesques* (Paris: Bibliopolis, 1999) [cd-rom].
[13] Flaubert's 'Realism' is, of course, in itself disputable. See for instance Christopher Prendergast, *The Order of Mimesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), chapter 6.
[14] *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by William Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 496 and 497.

literary group had formed around its authors.[15] In addition, reference to 'Histoire morale contemporaine' in the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux* of necessity alerts the reader to correspondences between the Goncourt Brothers and Émile Zola, whose highly successful *Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire* deals with the effects of physiology, heredity and environment on the members of the Rougon-Macquart family.[16]

The *Rougon-Macquart* series is, in a sense, the *grand projet* of nineteenth-century French literature, perhaps a natural evolution from Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, and it is born of a tradition of sociological enquiry and categorisation in which the Goncourts themselves participate. The most unequivocal example of this in the Goncourts is the 1866 edition of *Henriette Maréchal*, in which the novelists divide their *oeuvre* into three almost Balzacian categories.[17] Each category, as chapter 2 A will argue, corresponds to a different social reality and as such announces the divisions of the *Rougon-Macquart*: Artistes, Bourgeois, Peuple. *La Fille Élisa*, which is not planned according to this skeletal framework, is known to have been researched by both brothers and completed by Edmond in 1877, seven years after his brother's death and in the same year as the publication of Zola's *L'Assommoir*. *La Faustin* and *Les Frères Zemganno*, by contrast, were not jointly planned. Given its origins, *La Fille Élisa* appears as a novel marking the transition between two similar, yet fundamentally different, aesthetic systems. One of the novels categorised in *Henriette Maréchal* - *Mademoiselle Tony-Fréneuse*, later to become *Chérie* - was

---

[15] 'Edmond et Jules de Goncourt' in *Du Roman: sur Stendhal, Flaubert et les Goncourt*, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Brussels: Complexe, 1989), pp. 247-284 (pp. 274 and 283-84).

[16] According to the Goncourt *Journal*, Zola first explains the nature and structure of his project to Edmond on 14 December 1868 (2, p. 186), at which point he speaks of an 'histoire d'une famille' in ten volumes. By 27 August 1870 (2, p. 271), this has expanded to become an 'histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille'.

[17] Nadine Satiat states confidently that Balzac is 'le maître absolu des Goncourt en littérature'. Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Une voiture de masques*, ed. by Nadine Satiat (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1990), p. 12. Ronnie Butler has explored the Goncourts' appreciation of Balzac in the article 'Les Goncourt admirateurs de Balzac', *L'Année balzacienne*, 8 (1987), 345-61. Marcel Sauvage has likened the characters Germinie Lacerteux to Cousine Bette and Madame Gervaisais to Ursule Mirouet. *Jules et Edmond de Goncourt: précurseurs* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1970), p. 46.

not to be completed until 1884, by Edmond alone. This is not the only Goncourtian novel to undergo a title change. Indeed, titology will be examined in the first section of this thesis where it will be argued that the paratextual elements of Goncourt's solo novels point at one and the same time to a continuity and rupture of pre- and post-1870 aesthetic doctrines.

Within studies of Naturalism, there is a large body of criticism on the nature of the Goncourt-Zola relationship, and it seems that there is a reluctance to consider the Naturalism of the Goncourts in general terms without reference to Zola. This reaction stems from the fact that the Naturalist novel is today virtually synonymous with the *Rougon-Macquart* series. Two complementary articles that explore the nature of the sometimes fraught relationship between Goncourt and Zola have been penned by Colette Becker and Anne Belgrand.[18] Less valid are those studies that entrench themselves so firmly in one camp or the other as to be of limited critical use. Two blatant examples of this form of critical side-taking are to be found in Marcel Sauvage's *Jules et Edmond de Goncourt: précurseurs*, which studies both the influences on the Goncourts and their influence on future generations of writers.

> Des critiques ont longtemps refusé aux Goncourt d'avoir été les initiateurs du naturalisme littéraire, qui marque la fin du XIXe siècle. Émile Zola passe encore pour en avoir été le maître, il n'en fut que porte-drapeau et le théoricien un peu ridicule, après Taine.

Crowning one or the other author as king of the Naturalist movement will be of little relevance to the present study, for it would add little to the body of criticism. In another passage, however, Sauvage's book provides the critic with more concrete terms with which to begin considering the Goncourts as Naturalists (or not, as the case may be): 'treize ans avant *L'Assommoi*r [...] depuis longtemps, les Goncourt revendiquent la paternité de cette expression, signe de ralliement de la nouvelle

[18] Colette Becker, 'Les Goncourt, modèles de Zola?', *Francofonia*, 20 (1991), 105-13. Anne Belgrand, 'Zola "élève" des Goncourt: le thème de l'hystérie', *Francofonia*, 20 (1991), 115-31.

école, *le document humain*, qu'ils ont employée les premiers et qui leur revient en propre'.[19]

The partiality - bias even - of Sauvage's opinion only becomes clear when its terms are compared to a statement of complaint registered by Edmond in the preface to *La Faustin* (this statement is reproduced below). In terms of contemporary literary criticism, however, the pronouncement is a war-cry to reinterpret literary history and to assign the Goncourts a substantial role in the emergence of the new aesthetic. Both Goncourt's and Sauvage's assertions highlight the instability of the terms 'Naturalism' and 'document humain'. It should be recorded that the terms of Sauvage's assertion are culled directly from Edmond de Goncourt, who expresses his ownership and paternity in no uncertain terms:

> Cette expression [documents humains] très blaguée dans le moment, j'en réclame la paternité, la regardant, cette expression, comme la formule définissant le mieux et le plus significativement le mode nouveau de travail de l'école qui a succedé au romantisme: l'école du *document humain*.[20]

Note that at the time of publication of *La Faustin* in 1882, Edmond de Goncourt, rather than distinguish between Realism and Naturalism, sees them as subsumed under the auspices of the 'école du document humain'. The difficulty for the critic, of course, lies in reconciling Edmond de Goncourt's intentions as expressed in his prefaces with his novelistic accomplishments.

The origins of the term Naturalism are traced by Sylvie Thorel in 'Naturalisme, naturaliste' - where she also evaluates the new meanings it acquires with the birth of the Zolian novel - as well as by Colette Becker.[21] These different significations are also analysed by prominent Zola scholar David Baguley, who, in addition to

---

[19] *Jules et Edmond de Goncourt: précurseurs*, pp. 91 and 105.
[20] *La Faustin*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Bertrand (Arles: Actes Sud, 1995 [1882]), p. 7.
[21] Sylvie Thorel, 'Naturalisme, naturaliste', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 60 (1986), 76-88. Colette Becker, *Lire le réalisme et le naturalisme* (Paris: Dunod, 1992), pp. 62-4.

assessing the artistic, philosophical and scientific interpretations of the movement, provides a framework by which to date it.[22] Three events are cited by him as central to the Naturalists: the Trapp dinner which first brought authors together in 1877, the *Soirées de Médan*, their joint publication in 1880, and the 'Manifeste des cinq', symbol of the internal rupture of the group.[23] Of interest to a study of Edmond de Goncourt's changing aesthetic in the tumultuous and choppy literary waters of the late nineteenth century is Baguley's conviction that by 1880 the group had peaked:

> If, as we can confidently state, the naturalist group, in so far as it had ever functioned in this way, was after 1880 no longer a coherent active force, then perhaps the greatest irony of the whole situation is the fact that its virtual disintegration coincided exactly with the beginning of a period of great productivity of naturalist texts in France and abroad.[24]

The irony of this situation is further confirmed by Christophe Charle's sociological study of the production of literary texts, *La Crise littéraire dans l'époque du naturalisme*.[25] Charle's work is itself a product of the school of thought inaugurated by Pierre Bourdieu in *Les Règles de l'art*, a study of Flaubert that examines the influence of market forces and the social position of authors on the field of cultural production. In terms of Edmond de Goncourt's works, there is a fascinating increase in sales at the very moment that the elements of the Naturalist aesthetic are sidelined. Even though the last three novels move toward a more rarefied aesthetic doctrine, their sales do not suffer unduly due to the author's association with the dominant group, on the contrary.[26] The instability of the literary field cannot be overestimated, and the year that *Chérie* was published has been called 'une année de transition',

---

[22] *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), pp. 16-28.
[23] *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision*, p. 16. Colette Becker dates the 'grande période du naturalisme' from 1876-1884. *Lire le réalisme et le naturalisme* (Paris: Dunod, 1992), p. 61.
[24] *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision*, p. 24.
[25] *La Crise littéraire à l'époque du naturalisme: roman, théâtre et politique; essai d'histoire sociale des groupes et genres littéraires* (Paris: Presses de l'École normale supérieure, 1979).
[26] According to François Fosca six out of the first eight thousand copies of *Chérie* to be printed were sold on the day of its release. *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, p. 339.

making Edmond de Goncourt's last novel and his decision to quit literature more central to a study of the changes underway in the literary field.[27]

Aesthetically, it is the emphasis on the 'document humain' and scientific method that would most seem to distinguish Naturalism from preceding cultural trends. Gone are the days when authors can launch invitations to imaginary voyages. The cult of the so-called 'document humain' advocates a scientific approach to literature, one in which fiction has a material basis in reality, rather than in the imagination:

> Donc ces hommes, ces femmes, et même les milieux dans lesquels ils vivent, ne peuvent se rendre qu'au moyen d'immenses emmagasinements d'observations, d'innombrables notes prises à coups de lorgnon, de l'amassement d'une collection de *documents humains*, semblable à ces montagnes de calepins de poche qui représentent, à la mort d'un peintre, tous les croquis de sa vie. Car seuls, disons-le bien haut, les documents humains font les bons livres: les livres où il y a de la vraie humanité sur ses jambes (*Les Frères Zemganno*, pp. 2-3).

Undeniably, the Goncourts worship at the fount of 'reality' rather than at the well of fiction. The most cursory survey of their joint novels reveals that all are to a greater or lesser extent *romans-à-clef* that have their origins in historical events or people. Robert Ricatte provides interesting information on this subject. *Les Hommes de lettres* (1860, later renamed *Charles Demailly*) is based on the Goncourts' experiences at various newspapers, including their cousin the marquis de Villedeuil's, and is a denunciation of the lack of individual style in journalism.[28] *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865) is a fictionalised account of the authors' maid, Rose Malingre. The characters of *Manette Salomon* (1867) are based on artists with whom the brothers had come into contact. Renée Mauperin is based on a young woman that Jules de Goncourt had known at school, Blanche Passy. Louis Bouilhet and Flaubert provided the brothers with a story in an anecdote about the Hôpital de Rouen, and the latter

[27] Louis Marquèze-Pouey, *Le Mouvement décadent en France* (Paris: PUF, 1986), p. 105.
[28] For more information see *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, pp. 120-36. A key to who's who is furnished in the *Journal* (31 March 1861, 1, pp. 679-80).

also arranged for medical demonstrations for *Soeur Philomène* (1861).[29] Madame Gervaisais' real-life counterpart is the Goncourts' relative Nephtalie de Courmont.[30] The assigning of roles is not so obvious in Edmond de Goncourt's novels. It is known, thanks to Ricatte's genetic study, that *La Fille Élisa* (1877) is based on the trial of a young woman about which the brothers had read. *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879) is a fictional transposition of the authors' lives written after Jules' death. Pinpointing a source for *La Faustin* (1882) and *Chérie* (1884) - the one being a possible interpretation and amalgamation of the lives of several actors, including Rachel Felix and Sarah Bernhardt, the other allegedly composed with the aid of letters and journals solicited from anonymous readers - is more problematic. The more multiple origins of the post-1870 characters, in particular in the two final novels, distinguishes them from their more unified, and more easily traceable, predecessors.

Given the authors' own considerable preoccupations with the 'document humain' and sources - obvious in their role as writers of history, as well - it is unsurprising that of the restricted number of monographs devoted to Goncourtian novels, two should focus on matters of textual genesis. Robert Ricatte published *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* in 1960, and reproduced for the benefit of future scholars the 'carnet préparatoire' of the novel.[31] Marie-Claude Bayle dedicates a similar study to *Chérie*.[32] Bayle's monograph compares details of the protagonist's life with incidents recorded in the *Journal*, and also discusses and reproduces some of the letters sent to Goncourt in response to his call-to-pens. In addition to these volumes which are of immediate relevance to the topic of the literary repositioning of the elder Goncourt

---

[29] The following references refer to *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*: *Germinie Lacerteux*, pp. 252-5; *Manette Salomon*, pp. 335-47; *Renée Mauperin*, pp. 234-9; *Soeur Philomène*, pp. 151-4 and p. 169.

[30] 'L'héroïne (elle a son modèle dans leur tante Nephtalie de Courmont) est une Française'. Charles Beuchat, *Histoire du naturalisme français*, 2 vols (Paris: Editions Corrêa, 1949), 1: *Le naturalisme en marche*, p. 349.

[31] (Paris: PUF, 1960).

[32] *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1983).

brothers, one genetic study of a pre-1870 novel has been undertaken by Marc Fumaroli ('Des carnets au roman: l'ironie esthétique dans *Madame Gervaisais*').[33] The present study hopes to use these genetic analyses as a springboard to trace the evolution of the role of the document in Edmond de Goncourt's four novels. Bayle and Ricatte's studies will of necessity provide a framework within which to position the analysis; but, as neither was undertaken in the context of a study of the changing literary environment of the *fin-de-siècle*, for present purposes they will provide more by way of information than analysis.

Edmond de Goncourt insists on the importance of gathering physical documents with which to create a text, and his lead will be followed here. The Goncourt correspondence is enormous and, for the most part, unpublished. Of the thirty volumes of letters received by the brothers that are held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, those letters that have been made public are the letters between Goncourt and Gustave Flaubert, Alphonse Daudet, and Joris-Karl Huysmans.[34] The *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* have also published selected letters from Paul Alexis, Robert de Montesquiou, the Count Primoli, Louis Bouilhet, the dedicacee of *Madame Bovary* (1857), and Eugène Labille.[35] In his lifetime, Edmond de Goncourt published a selection of his brother's correspondence in the volume simply entitled *Lettres*.[36] Notably absent from the above list is Zola, whose letters from Goncourt have been edited by Pierre Cogny in *Les Cahiers Naturalistes*.[37] Needless to say, even together these account for but a fraction of the actual correspondence, yet few

---

[33] *Romans d'archives*, ed. by R. Debray-Genette and J. Neefs (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1987), pp. 79-102.

[34] Other editions include *Lettres inédites de Jules de Goncourt à la princesse Mathilde* in *Spaziani gli amici della principessa Mathilde*, (Rome: n.pub., 1960) which I have not been able to consult; the Goncourt-Céard *Correspondance inédite (1876-1896)*, ed. by Colin Burns (Paris: Nizet, 1965); and *Lettres de jeunesse inédites*, ed. by Alain Nicolas (Paris: PUF, 1981).

[35] Paul Alexis: 7 (1999-2000), 11-68; Robert de Montesquiou: 7 (1999-2000), 69-96 (see also Joy Newton and Monique Fol, 'Robert de Montesquiou et Edmond de Goncourt: une amitié littéraire', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 7-1/2 (1978-1979), 85-103); Count Primoli: 5 (1997), 254-81; Louis Bouilhet: 3 (1994), 78-90; Eugène Labille: 3 (1994), 91-103.

[36] (Paris: Charpentier, 1885)

[37] 'Edmond de Goncourt: lettres inédites à Émile Zola', 5 (1959), 526-42.

critics since Alidor Delzant and Robert Ricatte have used these immense primary resources, particularly letters sent to the Goncourts, in their studies of the brothers' novels. Astonishing indeed since the correspondence is of relevance both in terms of situating Edmond de Goncourt within, and assessing his awareness of, the cultural field, as well as in reconstructing his creative processes.

Aside from the importance they attached to documentation, the Goncourt brothers asserted the primacy of 'nervosité', a term that they understood as a heightened artistic sensitivity to all sorts of stimuli and language. As Edmond said himself: 'Les critiques peuvent dire tout ce qu'ils veulent de Zola, ils ne pourront pas nous empêcher, mon frère et moi, d'être les saints Jean-Baptiste de la nervosité moderne' (*Journal*, 23 April 1878, 2, pp. 775-6). It is this individual style that transforms novels based on documents into works of art. In his 1884 novel *À Rebours*, Huysmans' des Esseintes, the quintessential Decadent man (whom Edmond de Goncourt thinks is the perfect mate for Chérie and whom critics have speculated could be modelled in part on Edmond de Goncourt),[38] places *La Faustin* firmly within his Decadent library because of its fraught style:

> C'était un style perspicace et morbide, nerveux et retors, diligent à noter l'impalpable impression qui frappe les sens et détermine la sensation, un style expert à moduler les nuances compliquées d'une époque qui était par elle-même singulièrement complexe. En somme, c'était le verbe indispensable aux civilisations décrépites qui, pour l'expression de leurs besoins, exigent, à quelque âge qu'elles se produisent, des acceptions, des tournures, des fontes nouvelles et de phrases et de mots (p. 208).

The qualities discussed by des Esseintes have also been commented upon by living critics. Georges Peylet emphasises the link between stylistic virtuosity and Decadence (or the decline of civilisations) in an article entitled 'L'art maniériste

[38] David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 47. Koenraad Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 163. The principal model for des Esseintes is Robert de Montesquiou.

d'Edmond de Goncourt dans *La Faustin*, ou la déviation du modèle naturaliste'.[39] Marcel Proust's opinion on Goncourtian style is recorded in his pastiche of the Goncourt *Journal*, where it is noteworthy that most references are to Edmond alone.[40] The pastiche is, Proust points out, 'laudative en somme'.[41] Jean-Yves Tadié summarises Proust's opinion when he writes: 'ce qui, pour les Goncourt, sépare la littérature du reportage, c'est "l'effort d'écrire", qui se marque dans le rythme, la cadence des périodes, "l'epithète rare", le néologisme: l'écriture artiste'.[42] 'Écriture artiste' is the Goncourts' own name for their style which, it will become clear, is not unlike literary impressionism.

The impressionist aspect of the Goncourtian style has attracted critics like Petit de Julleville and writer Jules Lemaître and was widely commented upon by *fin-de-siècle* contemporaries.[43] Petit de Julleville's history of French language and literature, published in 1899, a formidable and well-documented tome that is not easily summarised, offers invaluable insights into the literature of the Second Empire as understood at the end of that century. The so-called Realist school (which, for Petit de Julleville's purposes, encompasses much of the century) is divided into three somewhat overlapping categories: the first is the Realism of 'art for art's sake', and includes Gautier and Flaubert; the second, 'utilitarian' type of Realism belongs to Proudhon and Zola; the third Realism posits a 'doctrine sensualiste' and is the domain of Gautier (again) and the Goncourt brothers. In a later chapter on Naturalism, Petit de Julleville argues that certain supposedly Naturalist authors, Alphonse Daudet and

---

[39] *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, pp. 261-74.
[40] *À la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. by Jean-Yves Tadié, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard 'Pléiade', 1987-89 [1919-27]), 4, pp. 287-95. See also *ALR*, 4, p. 488, footnote 3. Annick Bouillaguet has studied the pastiche in 'Proust lecteur des Goncourt: du pastiche satirique à l'imitation sérieuse', in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, pp. 339-48.
[41] Marcel Proust, 'Les Goncourt devant leurs cadets', in *Contre Sainte-Beuve, Pastiches et mélanges, Essais et articles*, ed. by Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard 'Pléiade', 1971), pp. 641-3 (p. 642).
[42] *Introduction à la vie littéraire du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Bordas, 1970), p.80.
[43] L. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, 8 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1899), 3: *Dix-neuvième siècle, période contemporaine (1850-1900)*. Jules Lemaître, *Les Contemporains: études et portraits littéraires (troisième série)* (Paris: Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie, n.d.).

the Goncourts precisely, are more accurately defined as impressionists. This view is shared by Enzo Caramaschi who also considers the brothers as impressionists. Caramaschi believes that the Goncourts are disillusioned with the conception of art as useful. Consequently, they replace 'usefulness' with the murky concept of artistic 'perception' and grant the objects described in their novels an almost spiritual role.[44]

Like Naturalism, the Decadent movement is extremely difficult to define and to date (naturally, dating depends largely on the definition of the term). Indeed, the main periods of Decadent and Naturalist literary production overlap, as Philip Stephan rightly points out.[45] The most succinct, comprehensive and recent analysis of conflicting definitions of the term 'Decadent' is provided in David Weir's *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*.[46] Weir's thesis is that Decadence is a feature found in much nineteenth-century literature and that it paved the way for the birth of modernism. This position is particularly convincing as it allows the critic to track the evolution of certain thematic and stylistic traits through the century. In this vein, a chapter of Weir's study that compares Naturalism and Decadence uses *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865) as its base text, and argues that the Goncourt brothers simultaneously helped mould both the Naturalist school and the so-called Decadent movement. According to Weir, Decadence can be defined as 'an aesthetic expression of naturalistic degeneration'. Weir states that his view of Decadence differs dramatically from the views of Mario Praz, A.E. Carter, Phillip Stephan and Koenraad Swart, who all consider the aesthetic in its relation to Romanticism.[47] To their view Weir opposes the traditional belief of French literary critics who regard Decadence as announcing another movement, or as a lesser form of symbolism,

---

[44] *Réalisme et impressionnisme dans l'oeuvre des frères Goncourt*, pp. 47-48.
[45] *Paul Verlaine and the Decadence 1882-1890* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), pp 8-9.
[46] Even the choice of Decadence or Decadent as terms of reference is contentious. Marquèze-Pouey prefers 'décadisme' as it hasn't the negative connotations of 'décadence' and 'décandentisme' (Baju's term), which suggests the end of one era rather than the birth of a new one. *Le Mouvement décadent en France*, p. 10.
[47] *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), pp. 48 and 5.

rather than as an aesthetic in its own right. In effect, Decadence has long had these negative undertones, a fact witnessed most obviously in Max Nordau's highly moralistic *Degeneration* (1892), which posits Decadence as an illness, and Decadent art as the product of deranged minds.

For the present purposes, Decadence will be defined by borrowing from both Weir and fellow theorist of Decadence, Jean Pierrot. In contrast to Weir who contends that Decadence, though culminating in the late nineteenth century, is present throughout the nineteenth century, Pierrot, along with Louis Marquèze-Pouey, believes that Decadence is largely confined to the 1880s and 1890s.[48] Yves-Alain Fabre extends the date marginally when he states that 'le terme décadent [...] s'applique à un certain état d'esprit qui apparaît vers 1875 pour se poursuivre jusqu'aux années 1900'.[49] Koenraad Swart offers 1877-1905 as his timeframe and one particularly restricted view sees the *fin-de-siècle* as beginning in 1892 when the *Rougon-Macquart* series is drawn to a close.[50] Regardless of these minor disagreements in dating, it is undeniable that the Decadent aesthetic, which at one and the same time prized the acceptance of modernity and mourned the contingent decline of past civilisations, is in full swing by the mid 1880s. Anatole Baju, founder of the journal *Le Décadent* - whose motto is 'guerre au mercantilisme dans les Arts, place aux artistes' - defines the doctrine in 1886 by accentuating its modernity and anti-commercialism.[51] The exact start and end of the aesthetic is impossible to pinpoint, yet these dates attest to a common belief that some sort of aesthetic change had taken place and was dominant in the last decades of the century. The late nineteenth century crystallises

---

[48] Henri Mitterand expresses an opinion similar to Weir's in *Le Regard et le signe* (Paris: PUF, 1987), where he writes: 'Dès avant 1870, les grands thèmes de la décadence sont en place' (p. 281).
[49] 'Vanités décadentes' in *Fins de siècle: terme-évolution-révolution?*, pp. 355-63 (p. 355).
[50] 'La fin de siècle commence en 1892 avec l'élaboration des *Trois Villes* qui fait de Zola un romancier du présent'. Bertrand Marchal, 'Fin de siècle et temps nouveaux ou l'évangile selon Zola' in *Fins de siècle: colloque de Tours 4-6 juin 1985*, ed. by Pierre Citti (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1990), pp. 325-36 (p. 335).
[51] *Le Décadent*, n.s. 3, 4 (1-15 February 1888), p. 1; *L'Anarchie littéraire* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1904), p. 10. Baju's theories do not always correspond to what modern critics view as Decadence. His opinion of literature as pursuing a social ideal rather than being disinterested is the antonym of current acceptances of Decadent art.

themes present much earlier. For instance, the cherished theme of disguise fascinates not only the Decadents, but Naturalists and earlier authors such as Champfleury who wrote several pantomimes while proclaiming the superiority of 'truth' over 'fiction'.[52] Subsuming Champfleury under the heading 'Decadent', however, ignores the particularities of his period and ignores the differences in treatment of the themes over the century. Likewise, considering an author such as Théophile Gautier as a Decadent - which would be possible if disguise, ennui, and masquerade were thematic requirements - ignores the changes in the literary field that took place in the second half of the century, and in particular ignores the democratisation and expansion of French society and literature after 1870. Nor does it take into account the particularities of Decadent style, such as the disintegration of syntax and increasing interest in foreign and ancient vocabularies that are distant from the everyday realities of the average late nineteenth-century reader.

The problems of periodisation at the end of the nineteenth century are amplified by the common usage of the term 'fin-de-siècle' to refer to the years 1880-1900. As was argued at the Colloque de Tours, the term *fin-de-siècle* designates both a general and a specific period. While it can refer to any end of century, it is commonly employed to denote the end of the nineteenth century in France.

> Quand nous employons la formule fin de siècle, nous pensons d'abord à une époque précise: les années qui ont précédé la fin du XIXe siècle et qui ont été marquées par une esthétique précise, des débats et des options spécifiques. Nous confondons volontiers par ailleurs fin de siècle et décadence.[53]

Decadence corresponds to an aesthetic while *fin-de-siècle* corresponds to a fertile period of French literature in which movements rose and fell as regularly as tides.

---

[52] The pantomimes of Champfleury and Gautier have recently been published in a collected volume. Champfleury, Gautier, Nodier & Anonymes, *Pantomimes*, ed. by Isabelle Baugé (Paris [?]: Cicéro, 1995).

[53] J.M. Goulemot, J. Lecuru, D. Masseau, 'Les Siècles ont-ils une fin?' in *Fins de siècle:colloque de Tours 4-6 juin 1985*, pp. 17-33 (p. 21).

This is underlined in the title of an 1892 publication whose name more than reflects the chaos of the late nineteenth-century literary field: *L'Anarchie littéraire: les différentes écoles: les décadents, les symbolistes, les romaines, les instrumentistes, les magiques, les magnifiques, les anarchistes, les socialistes, etc.*[54] This account demonstrates the wealth of names used at the time to designate groupings of authors. Present day confusion of Decadence and *fin-de-siècle* perhaps arises from the fact that both terms were in use in the late 1800s: *fin-de-siècle* is referred to in the *Voltaire* on 4 May 1886 and in an 1888 play by Jouvenot and Micard.[55] Thus, not only has fin-de-siècle come to mean a specific period in the evolution of literature from Realism to modernity in the 1880s and 1890s, but it is also used to qualify novels and others artistic productions exhibiting thematic and stylistic tendencies of the period. For present purposes it will refer to both of these definitions as a means of marking the instability of the period.

It is best to approach the Decadent movement synchronically as forming a more or less coherent whole in the last two decades of the century, and to explore the evolution of Decadent themes diachronically across the century, as this approach does not preclude Decadent themes or styles being present in works of earlier writers. Thus, where Weir argues that *Germinie Lacerteux* is both Naturalist and Decadent, this thesis will argue that it is in the novels of Edmond de Goncourt, written in the years around 1880, that the essential themes of Decadent poesis are fully elaborated. *Germinie Lacerteux* does elevate a base subject to the status of art, and does treat literature in a painterly fashion, but it is with the advent of new, more aristocratic subjects that Goncourt fully consecrates his works, both stylistically (as will be seen with regard to discourse and narration) and thematically (as will be seen in the use of documents), to the cult of art. It is in the later novels that the characters

[54] (Paris: Librairie Léon Vanier, 1904).
[55] Daniel Mortier, 'Quelques questions posées au concept "fin de siècle"' in *Fins de siècle: terme-évolution-révolution?*, pp. 336-43 (p. 336).

themselves pursue the cult of art, thereby mirroring the stylistic concerns of their author.

While literary critics, including Mireille Dottin-Orsini, Pierre-Jean Dufief, and Virginie Fauvin, have studied certain Decadent themes in the works of the Goncourts, no major critique of all four novels in relation to the Decadence has been carried out.[56] This state of affairs is, to say the least, surprising, given that, as Matei Calinescu forcefully states:

> During the early 1880s the Goncourt brothers themselves came to be regarded - and this was *before* the specifically 'decadentist' movement started in 1886 - as *decadents*, and even more than that, as the foremost representatives of a contemporary decadent style.[57]

Late nineteenth-century civilisation was depicted as decaying and favoured certain themes, for example escape from reality, *ennui*, mysticism, satanism, pessimism, idealism, individuality, sexual enslavement, and the primacy of art and artifice, over others. A novel is not automatically Decadent for treating these themes, however, for they can be found in works considered to embody Naturalism. *Nana*, for example, is the quintessential tale of sexual enslavement, it portrays Decadence in a literal sense insofar as it tells the story of Nana's decline and fall.[58] This illustrates the extent to which the two aesthetics are interrelated, how works that are Naturalist are in many ways already Decadent, and how, to borrow David Baguley's term, Naturalism is 'entropic'. Naturalism, however, on the whole tends to denounce these themes while

---

[56] Mireille Dottin Orsini, '*La Faustin,* les paons blancs et l'agonie sardonique' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, pp. 247-60. Pierre-Jean Dufief, 'Les Goncourt précurseurs de la décadence', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 13-22. Virginie Fauvin, 'Fards et plâtres dans l'univers romanesque des Goncourt ou l'art du masque morbide', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 44-9.This last volume contains articles devoted more to style and Decadence: Jean-Louis Cabanès, 'Décadence délicieuse et inachèvement dans l'esthéthique des Goncourt', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 32-40 and Enzo Caramaschi, 'La Déconstruction décadente du roman', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 41-3.

[57] *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 169.

[58] For more on Zola and Decadence see Antoine Compagnon, 'Zola dans la décadence', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 67 (1993), 211-22.

Decadence celebrates them. Naturalism deals with Decadent themes, Decadence Naturalist ones: the relationship is symbiotic. Max Nordau, for instance, declared Zola, perhaps the quintessential Naturalist, a Decadent and degenerate author.[59] Nevertheless, by dissociating such themes from a pseudo-scientific Naturalist framework, Decadence is born. Effects are no longer only of interest because of their causes. In the Decadent art, the thematics of degeneration is aestheticised. This rift is otherwise manifest in the rejection of the working-classes in favour of refined artists and rarefied language.

The distance separating the real and the artificial, mimesis and poesis, is the subject of this thesis. An author like Edmond de Goncourt who so values both 'documents humains' and individual expression must be acutely aware of the constraints of the Naturalist ethos, or indeed of any system that becomes established and, as a result, formulaic or programmatic. With this in mind, the gap that opens between the 'document humain' and Decadence, in both stylistics and thematics will be probed. Beginning with paratextual writings, moving from there to a study of the workings of the 'document humain', and finishing with an analysis of stylistic paralysis, this thesis hopes to simultaneously explore how the imaginary interacts with the observation of nature and ascertain how the mimetic truth of the novels is jeopardised by changing aesthetic values. What, for the author, constitutes reality? What is the role of the art in reality? And reality in art? I will argue that Edmond de Goncourt's novels display many symptoms of Decadence, though they are rooted in recorded nature. In this respect, Edmond de Goncourt's novels are one of the chief intellectual and artistic inspirations for the Decadents of the *fin-de-siècle*.

[59] Marion Schmid, 'From Decadence to Health: Zola's *Paris*', *Romance Studies*, 18-2 (2000), 99-111.

Chapter 2A
Paratexts
Titles and Title Changes

> A style means, among other things, a name; one clue to a writer's style is how he names his writings; and we have much personal documentation, casting light upon that process in some important cases, and even listing alternates considered and rejected. The prospect is not uninviting.[1]

As mentioned earlier, the three categories into which the Goncourt *oeuvre* was temporarily divided correspond to different social realities: 'Artistes': *Les Hommes de lettres*, *L'Atelier Langibout*; 'Bourgeois': *Renée Mauperin*, *Madame Tony Fréneuse*; 'Peuple': *Sœur Philomène*, *Germinie Lacerteux*.[2] It is interesting to note that of the works listed in *Henriette Maréchal*, the two yet to be written - *Madame Tony Fréneuse* and *L'Atelier Langibout* - are renamed before publication, perhaps even before writing commences. *L'Atelier Langibout* would become, in 1867, *Manette Salomon*, while *Madame Tony Fréneuse* was not to be written until 1883-4, by Edmond alone, with *Chérie* as its title. On one level, this points to a continuity between those novels written pre- and post-1870, continuity evidenced in another manner by *La Fille Élisa*, which was researched by both Goncourts and composed by the survivor in 1877, seven years after his brother's death and in the same year as the publication of Zola's *L'Assommoir*. On another level, the title alterations point to changes in ideological and aesthetic concerns. In this brief analysis, title changes will be studied with reference to the continuity between joint and solo works of the Goncourts, but, in keeping with the general focus of this thesis, special emphasis will be put on the works of Edmond de Goncourt. While in both cases the titles are modified, I will argue that the nature of the modification is different - namely that in the post-1870 titles there is, from the outset, less emphasis on social realities and

[1] Harry Levin, 'The Title as Literary Genre', *Modern Language Review*, 72 (1977), xxiii-xxxvi (p. xxxv).
[2] See chapter 1, p. 8.

Naturalist types - and that this difference bears witness to changes in the focus of Edmond de Goncourt's novels compared to the novels of the Goncourt brothers. These differences in turn, are a manifestation of the changes in the literary environment over the Goncourts' forty-year career. I will be concerned with the provenance of the titles as well as with the type of ideological and aesthetic narrative choices they represent.

In order to limit the scope of this analysis, it should be pointed out that the Goncourts sometimes refer to their novels by vague phrases which are not properly speaking formal titles. Raising this issue is an attempt at drawing out the contrast between titles, working-titles, and descriptive phrases employed by the author to designate his work. For instance, authors may sometimes use a phrase to refer to a novel, without ever intending that this phrase become the title. Theodor Adorno addresses this with regard to Kafka, and he argues that certain words could quite simply be 'ceux qu'il [Kafka] employait dans la conversation pour désigner ces oeuvres [Der Prozess, Das Schloss]'.[3] In effect, these titles were given to the works posthumously by Kafka's editor. Leaving aside the example of posthumous titles, which must be considered as a case apart, the essential difference between these descriptive names and the titles which works are eventually given, is that the conversational names do not form part of the consecrated work itself, they are not part of the fiction presented in the novel, but only serve to denote the subject or novel within the author's private environment. There are numerous examples of this type of designation in relation to the Goncourt novels. The only alternative name for *La Fille Élisa* (1877), for example, is more akin to a subject heading, or a generic indication, than to the title of a novel - 'roman de la prostitution' - and dates from before 1870. *Madame Gervaisais* (1869), the last of the novels written by both brothers, and thus chronologically closest to *La Fille Élisa*, also has a similar name: 'roman de ma tante'.[4] Likewise, *Chérie*, which had

[3] *Notes sur la littérature*, trans. by Sibylle Muller (Paris: Flammarion, 1984), p. 243.
[4] 'Préface', *Madame Gervaisais*, ed. by Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), p. 10.

several incarnations, is referred to on one occasion as a 'roman d'amour. Ce serait l'amour d'une femme du monde' (*Journal*, 1 Feb.1865, 1, p. 1137), but this is only before work on the novel has begun. These titles, which are descriptive yet vague, seem to date, for the most part, from before 1870, though there is no way to be certain without undertaking a study of the manuscripts. I would contend that there is a difference between these types of designation and working-titles, insofar as the former belong to the author's private sphere, whereas the latter may well enter into circulation in the public domain. Four years after being referred to as a 'roman d'amour', for example, *Chérie* was referred to in the Goncourt *Journal* as '*Femmes du monde'* (22 Sept. 1869, 2, p. 238) and this seems more of a working-title. This chapter will be more or less restricted to titles and working-titles.

To proceed with an analysis of the name changes of the novels in question, changes from working-titles to actual publication titles, the works have been classified according to 'before' and 'after' criteria (see tables A and B). For the most part, this information is drawn from indications found in the Goncourt *Journal* and correspondence. In the tables below, one of which lists pre-1870 title changes and one of which lists post-1870 changes, the working-title and its first mention in the *Journal*, if applicable,[5] is followed by the actual publication date and title of the novels.

[5] This must suffice, as genetic studies of the Goncourt novels, joint and solo, do not trace the process of creation of titles.

TABLE A: **Pre-1870 title changes (fiction only)**

Working-Title	**Date first mentioned in *Journal***	**Definitive Title and Date of Publication**
		Sœur Philomène (1861)
La Bourgeoisie	March 1855	*Renée Mauperin* (1864)
La Jeune bourgeoise	13 July 1862	*Renée Mauperin* (1864)
Au Bal masqué	3 Sept. 1856	*Henriette Maréchal* (1865)
		Germinie Lacerteux (1865) (book mentioned by title in *Journal* on 12 Oct. 1864)
L'Atelier Langibout		*Manette Salomon* (1867) (book mentioned by title in *Journal* on 5/08/1866)
Les Artistes		*Manette Salomon* (1867)
Les Hommes de lettres	31 May 1856	*Charles Demailly* (1868)[6]
(conversational title: 'roman de ma tante'[7])		*Madame Gervaisais* (1869)

[6] *Les Hommes de lettres* was published with this title in 1860 and then republished under the title *Charles Demailly* in 1868. See discussion page 28.
[7] See p. 24, note 4.

TABLE B: **Post-1870 title changes (fiction only)**

Working-Title	**Date first mentioned in *Journal***	**Definitive Title and Date of Publication**
(conversational title: 'roman de la prostitution')[8]		*La Fille Élisa* (1877) (mentioned in *Journal* 24 Feb. 1871)
Deux clowns	29 July 1878 (sole occurrence)	*Les Frères Zemganno* (1879)
Les Frères Bendigo		*Les Frères Zemganno* (1879)
Le Théâtre[9]	29 July 1860	*La Faustin* (1882) (mentioned in *Journal* 27 Aug. 1880)
Les Actrices[10]	24 Oct. 1855	*La Faustin* (1882) (mentioned in *Journal* 27 Aug. 1882)
Mlle Tony Fréneuse		*Chérie* (1884)
Madame Tony Fréneuse	*mentioned in *Henriette Maréchal*	*Chérie* (1884)
Femmes du monde	22 Sept. 1869 (sole occurrence)	*Chérie* (1884)
La Petite fille du maréchal[11]		*Chérie* (1884)

[8] In volume 2, p. 208, footnote 1 of the *Journal*, editor Robert Ricatte indicates that this is how the two brothers referred to their novel.

[9] *Journal*, 2, p. 879, note 1: 'Goncourt s'attelle à ce roman des ACTRICES ou du THEATRE, projeté depuis si longtemps, qui s'appellera LA FAUSTIN et qui paraîtra dans le Voltaire d'abord en novembre et décembre 1881 et en libraire le 17 janvier 1882'.

[10] See Dottin-Orsini's article '*La Faustin*, les paons blancs et l'agonie sardonique' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture,* ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 247-60, in which the reader is instructed to refer to *Les Actrices* for the beginnings of *La Faustin.* In actual fact, *Les Actrices* is a short story/novella written by the brothers Goncourt in 1856, and re-released by Edmond in 1892 under the name *Armande.* It is thus, in and of itself, a fine example of the changes in title which this section is examining. *Les Actrices (Armande)* (Toulouse: Éditions Ombres, 2000), pp. 21-2. For more detail see chapter 2 C passim.

[11] 'Bientôt paraîtra un quatrième et peut-être dernier roman, une étude des plus nuancées qui a pour titre: *La Petite-fille du maréchal*'. Louis Desprez, *L'Évolution naturaliste* (Paris: Tresse, 1884), p. 117.

The title changes in the novels written prior to Jules' death are in the order of general to particular and confirm specific thematic choices. Each working-title corresponds either to a 'type' - for example, the man of letters and the bourgeois woman - or to a place, a given environment - for example, a masked ball or an artist's studio. This indicates that the novels will present either tableaux of these environments or generalised portraits representative of certain types of people. In other words, use of this kind of title would suggest that the novel depicts shared or common characteristics of that class or professional group which it names.

By casting aside the working-title and its type-centred focus, and by choosing instead to use a proper name - normally the protagonist's - as a title, the thematic axis of the title shifts: types are sidelined in favour of named individuals. As a consequence, the characters of the novel are no longer explicitly linked to a specific type, that is to say they are no longer simply presented as examples of a given behavioural pattern. This is true insofar as *L'Atelier Langibout* becomes *Les Artistes*, but never becomes *L'artiste*. Instead, it is renamed *Manette Salomon*, a name which recalls at the same time Manet and the kingdom of Solomon, and reflects two of the thematic concerns of the novels, art and anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, this is a public change: upon serialisation in *Le Temps*, the title *L'Atelier Langibout* was used. The title change occurs only upon publication of the novel in book form in November.[12] Moreover, *La Bourgeoisie* becomes *La Jeune bourgeoise* (*Journal*, 13 July 1862, 1, p. 834), before this latter title is abandoned in favour of a proper name: Renée Mauperin. The individual has priority over the type, and the focus is on individuals (genus) rather than species. Even if the individual is prioritised over the type, the character cited in the title is, nonetheless, implicitly an example of the given category, only an underhanded or surreptitious example, for the initial title/category is unknown to the reader. At the same time, the title character is an individual who stands outside

[12] 'Chronologie', *Journal*, 1, p. lxxxvi.

category boundaries, an individual who stands alone and whose name will become associated with the given fictional reality to which it has lent its name. As such, the title name, the title character, even, enters empirical reality as a manner of designating the book, but also belongs to the fictional realm of the novel.

This general-to-particular pattern of title revision reflects a wider tendency of nineteenth-century 'titrology', which Christian Moncelet remarks on as follows: 'le titre se 'personnalise' assez généralement au XIXème siècle'.[13] The title can thus be referred to as a 'désignation factuelle la plus directe' (the example of this given by Genette in *Seuils* is *Madame Bovary*), as it names a specific object, person or theme (it is a thematic title), rather than a category (poem, novel of the people, etc., that which falls under the designation 'rhematic').[14] What is central as far as the Goncourt novels are concerned is that the reader, to a greater or lesser degree, is unaware of this change in focus as far as individual novels are concerned.

The titles of the novels written by both the brothers - *L'Atelier Langibout/Les Artistes*, *La Bourgeoisie/La Jeune bourgeoise*, *Au Bal masqué* - are all modified before publication and are therefore examples of private changes, examples of self-editing. *Les Hommes de lettres* is a curious exception to the general pattern put forth above, though it does not deviate so dramatically from the norm as to negate it. On the contrary, it elucidates a first evolution in the Goncourt *oeuvre*. In the case of *Les Hommes de lettres* (1860), the title is not changed until the reedition of the novel in 1868 as *Charles Demailly*. The novel was initially published under the more general title *Les Hommes de lettres* and the change of title to *Charles Demailly* took place in the public domain. In a sense, then, it can be asserted that the book was publicly renamed and reclassified. The reasons for this modification could be multiple - appealing to a wider audience, demonstrating how the authors' view of the novel has

[13] *Essai sur le titre en littérature et dans les arts* (Paris: BOF, 1972), p. 34.
[14] (Paris: Seuil, 1987), pp.74, 76, 82-5.

changed in reaction to the reception of the work, etc. - but it is undeniable that by making the choice public, the reader's interpretation of the novel is affected. For, as Charles Grivel comments in his theoretical analysis of titles, '*Le titre affiche la nature du texte*, et donc le genre de lecture qui lui convient'.[15] But, regardless of the fact that the title is modified publicly, the change is still in the direction of general to specific. One critic, Jacques Noiray, has even argued that the name Charles Demailly invokes Charles Lassailly, a friend of Balzac's: 'Car le nom et la destinée du personnage éponyme rappellent de trop près le nom et la fin de Charles Lassailly, ami et collaborateur de Balzac, mort fou en 1843, pour qu'il s'agisse d'une simple coïncidence'.[16] This intimates that the revision is essentially a means of situating the novel within a more 'real' world, a means of making the entire novel, from start to finish, a 'document humain', rather than just a fictional mise-en-scène of men of letters.

That *Charles Demailly* was originally released as *Les Hommes de lettres* in 1860 both ties it to the classification seen in the third edition of *Henriette Maréchal*, and announces a shift towards a Naturalism that would culminate in Zola's *Rougon-Macquart*. The difference between these two systems of classification is touched on by Genette, who explains that while Balzac hesitates and creates his structure as the novels are written, Zola's master plan is elaborated from the beginning of his *œuvre* (even if it is subject to modifications).[17] The *Henriette Maréchal* schema is midway between Balzac and Zola as it presents an *œuvre* that is at the same time divided into types that the authors wish to study in their environment - 'Bourgeois', 'Peuple', 'Artistes' - from the outset, yet evolves as individual titles (and novels, of course) are modified over time, and other new works are added to the overall structure. The

---

[15] *Production de l'intérêt romanesque: un état du texte (1870-1880), un essai de constitution de sa théorie* (Paris: Mouton, 1973), p. 168.
[16] 'Déconstruction du romanesque: la subversion du modèle balzacien dans *Charles Demailly*' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 167-80 (p. 167).
[17] *Seuils*, pp. 59-60.

central difference between these two authors and the Goncourts is the presence of what could be termed a 'master' title to which the subsidiary titles conform, even though Balzac's title was only found retrospectively, in 1841-1842.[18] Where many of Balzac and Zola's works can be designated under the titles *La Comédie humaine* and *Les Rougon-Macquart*, the Goncourts have a seemingly disparate collection of novels which were only regrouped publicly at one point, in February 1866, and then only on the false title page of the third edition of a play which is little known to the non-specialist public. The news is not screamed from the rooftop. The Goncourts have a plan, but they have no genealogy, no family name for their *oeuvre*. Hence, whatever grandiose structure the authors intended to give to their *oeuvre*, it remains, for the reasons outlined above, more or less hidden from the reader.

Three of the novels written in the 1860s do not appear to have had more than one title, descriptive phrases excluded: *Sœur Philomène* (1861), *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865), and *Madame Gervaisais* (1869). What these three books have in common is that the eponymous titles name the (anti) heroines of the narratives. Even if 'sœur' and 'madame' are not given names, they are the titles by which the heroines are known in their fictional world. Of the remaining three joint novels, two of the titles evoke people with whom the Goncourts would have been familiar, Charles Lassailly and Manet, and the utilisation of such names suggests a desire to join fiction and reality, and this desire corresponds to the aesthetic beliefs of the period, namely that fiction should mirror reality. All of the title modifications before Jules' death, from both working-title and private descriptive phrase (which Genette would term 'rhematic' titles) to consecrated title, evolve from general to particular. In addition, each title is bipartite, and none diverges from the forename (or title)/surname model.

[18] The title *La Comédie humaine* first appears in the July 1842 preface to an edition of complete works. For more on the evolution of the *Comédie humaine* and its structure, see 'L'Univers de *La Comédie humaine*' in *La Comédie humaine*, ed. by P.-G. Castex *et al*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard 'Pléiade', 1976-1981), 1, pp. ix-xix.

The situation is somewhat different as concerns the post-1870 novels. An examination of the titles of Edmond de Goncourt's solo *oeuvre* must take into account the part played by the collective works and by collective work, if only because of the structure outlined in *Henriette Maréchal*. Strictly speaking, *La Fille Élisa* (1877) is the only post-Jules fictional work to which both authors actively and knowingly contributed: research was carried out by both Goncourt brothers in two main stages in the 1860s, and composition took place over the following decade.[19] The idea for the novel is born of a visit to the prison at Clermont on 28 October 1862, and this marks the first stage of preparation. The second stage, from which the name Élisa issues, falls between 1868-1869. This much is known thanks to Robert Ricatte's intricately detailed *Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* where he writes: 'Déjà, le 10 mars 1869, ... les voici occupés à saisir tous les gestes de l'accusé qu'ils pourront prêter à leur héroïne, déjà baptisée Élisa'.[20] Though the name of the heroine was chosen at this stage, there can be little certainty as far as the actual title of the novel is concerned - even if the title is eponymous - and unfortunately Ricatte's study does little to illuminate this problem. The title *La Fille Élisa* first appears in the *Journal* in 1871 (24 Feb. 1871, 2, p. 390): 'J'ai été mordu, ce matin, de l'envie d'écrire *La Fille Élisa*, ce livre que nous devions écrire, lui et moi, après *Madame Gervaisais*.' The fact that the desire to write is not simply the desire to write a novel about prostitute prisoners, but a desire to write *La Fille Élisa* implies that the title was decided prior to the younger brother's death. The next reference to the novel occurs at the beginning of May 1875, when Alphonse Daudet mentions the novel in a letter as a book that is missing from Goncourt's *oeuvre*: '*La Fille Élisa*, et un roman de high life [*Chérie* doubtless], ces deux notes manquent à votre oeuvre' (*Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 13, May 1875, p. 23). This is almost certainly a means of encouraging his friend to write a novel which he had discussed, but it could also indicate that Daudet was aware of the framework within which Goncourt wished to work. The prostitute

[19] Pre-1870 sources are used in later novels, but it was Edmond alone who chose them and composed the stories.
[20] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* (Paris: PUF, 1960), p. 18.

novel is equally invoked by name by Flaubert, who, in a letter to Edmond de Goncourt dated 31 December 1876 writes (presumably aware of the double entendre): 'Et, entre autres souhaits, que *La Fille Élisa* vous apporte beaucoup de gaieté!' (*Corres. Flaub-Gonc*, letter 194, 31 Dec. 1876, p. 253).

In many respects, *La Fille Élisa* is the most atypical of the Goncourt novels (both pre- and post-1870): it is written partly by Jules, its title is fixed before writing commences, it is the only roman-à-thèse, its title qualifies the proper name it contains, by specifying that the eponymous Élisa is a 'fille', a prostitute, and this links the individual to a type. It is the only one of Edmond de Goncourt's fictional works not to have its title modified, and it is also, as will be shown below, the only title in Edmond de Goncourt's solo *oeuvre* which draws its name from empirical reality. Nonetheless, in spite of these specificities, or perhaps because of them, the themes *La Fille Élisa* presents - such as silence - are central to an understanding of Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels.

Both brothers contributed in one manner or another to *La Fille Élisa*; but the part of each is less clear-cut in the three later novels, *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin*, and *Chérie*. There is no concrete evidence that *Les Frères Zemganno* was a novel both siblings intended to write, for even though as early as 1859 references to the circus are to be found in the *Journal*,[21] one has to wait until 1877 to find further allusion to the novel. This delay corresponds to the publication dates of Edmond de Goncourt's novels: *La Fille Élisa* appeared in 1877, *Les Frères Zemganno* in 1879, during which interval it would be safe to postulate that the circus novel was being written. In October 1877 Flaubert inquires after his friend's 'histoire d'un clown [...] ou plutôt ce roman sur les clowns' (*Corres. Flaub-Gonc*, letter 201, 9 Oct. 1877, p. 259) and Daudet writes to Edmond of 'vos clowns, vos clowns' (*Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 71,

[21] The Goncourts confide, 'Nous pensons à faire sur toutes les choses de la société une satire, un roman philosophique, dans les trucs bêtes d'une féerie de cirque' (*Journal*, 28 Oct. 1859, 1, p. 483), though it does not seem that work on this project ever started in earnest.

mid-July 1878, p. 58). On one occasion, the surviving brother refers to his novel as *Deux Clowns* (*Journal*, 29 July 1878, 2, p. 784): did he intend this as a title, or is it simply a way of referring to his work, as Flaubert referred to *Salammbô* as *Carthage*? Or is it a reference to Balzac's *La Rabouilleuse*, which was originally called *Les Deux Frères*?[22] Descriptive rhematic phrase or formal title, in December of the same year, another *Journal* entry - on 10 December - baptises the novel *Les Frères Bendigo*, and, in effect, this remains its title for several months. Goncourt is some way into drafting the novel before it is given a definitive title. It would appear, however, that this is because he hesitated over the ultimate name, that he in fact sought advice from a fellow writer, if the following note from Alphonse Daudet is any indication: 'Je suis si bien fait à Bendigo que je n'en vois plus d'autre. Zemganno a l'air fabriqué' (*Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 82, Feb. 1879, p. 64). This appears to have been precisely the advice that Goncourt was looking for, for on 12 March 1879 he writes to Julia Daudet, and on 17 March 1879 he writes to Flaubert, referring in both letters to *Les Frères Zemganno* (*Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 83, p. 65; *Corres Flaub-Gonc*, letter 208, p. 267). For the first time, a particular to particular title revision takes place, and this suggests an attention to detail and an attention to specific individualities not so pronounced in previous title modifications. For, the name Bendigo was borrowed from a real person: it was the pseudonym of English boxer William Thompson, as Pierre-Jean Dufief points out (*Corres. Gonc-Daud*, p. 64, footnote 2). The writer instead chooses a curious and colourful name that 'a l'air fabriqué', that is to say false and unreal, over a name that might have been recognised as being real, and might consequently have added to the 'effet de réel' of the novel, as is the case with *La Fille Élisa*, where the name is borrowed, fittingly, from 'la plus grande marchande de chair humaine de notre temps, Élisa, la Farcy II' (*Journal*, 26 March, 1, p. 338). Instead, the title of the 1879 novel conjures exotic images by means of a word that is phonetically unusual. In the story itself, the clown brothers change their name from Bescapé to Zemganno. In retrospect, the title places

[22] Maurice Hélin, 'Les Livres et leurs titres', *Marche romane*, 6-3/4 (1956), p. 139, footnote 3.

emphasis on the siblings as exotic artists rather than ordinary French brothers. The title *Les Frères Zemganno* illustrates, in a certain sense, the changing aesthetic concerns of the author over the span of his career, and an evolution between the collective works and the solo works, in which there is a more emphasis put on the imaginative.

While not announced in *Henriette Maréchal*, the idea of penning a novel dealing with the world of theatre had long been mulled over by the Goncourt brothers. In 1859, this novel is referred to as *Actrices*, and the following year, it is identified as *Le Théâtre* (cf. notes 8 and 9 above). The novel *La Faustin* (1882) is born of *Le Théâtre* and *Les Actrices*, but this latter was itself published as *Armande* in 1892. Between 1862 and 1877, however, there is little evidence of thought given to the project. By the time Edmond de Goncourt is again smitten with the idea, its name has reverted to *Les Actrices*. From the moment composition started, however, the single eponymous title that the novel had was *La Faustin* - there is a jump from a subject-related title to a role-related title, which is, given La Faustin's profession as actress, suitable. That the story's title changes so frequently suggests that the actual title was not chosen until work on the writing of the novel began. So long as the novel remained an idea, the title vacillated between two imprecise appellations. In 1880, after *La Fille Élisa* and *Les Frères Zemganno* had been completed, and the author had time to devote to his next project, the novel became known under its consecrated title: 'Aujourd'hui, au milieu d'une forte migraine, *La Faustin* fait tout à coup irruption dans ma cervelle, avec accompagnement de fièvre littéraire' (*Journal*, 27 Aug. 1880, 2, p. 869).

Of note in Edmond de Goncourt's two final books is the sort of name chosen for the main character, and, therefore, the titles. The main character of the penultimate novel is called Juliette Faustin, but the narrator continuously refers to her by the epithet 'La Faustin'. As Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau observes, 'le roman ne s'appelle pas *Juliette*

Faustin'.[23] The 'la' links the woman to her profession. The addition of the article transforms the person into a thing, even if grammatically adding an article to a name is a fairly common way of referring to famous actresses. 'La Faustin', though, is more a legendary symbol than a Naturalist type and such a symbolic name necessarily calls for comparisons with Faust. Comparisons with the legendary Faust, in turn, tie the novel to a long tradition of Faustian literature, by content or only by name, ranging from Elizabethan through German Romantic right up to Louis Bouilhet's *Faustine* (1864), and beyond into the twentieth century with Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947). Due to this tradition, the reader is alerted to the possible ruin of Juliette Faustin's soul: Faust is a conjurer, Juliette an actress, both deal with the art of illusion to the detriment of reality. Moreover, the association between the names Jules and Juliette alerts the reader to the perils of the Goncourts' artistic creation.[24]

In much the same manner, the name Chérie is like a diminutive which bestows certain qualities on the character of that name, not the least of which is preciousness. This emblematic name imposes itself upon the novel, because the protagonist is a creation founded upon the letters of numerous women. It is a private name, as the women's letters were private. It is also a name that is not really a name, but rather an intimate term of affection. It is a name that could evoke all women, or any woman, but never simultaneously, due to its private nature. The name is like a beacon on the title page of the novel, warning the reader that the narrative deals with a closed and private world.

Chérie (1884) is the one novel written solely by Edmond de Goncourt that was publicly forecast in *Henriette Maréchal*. However, nearly twenty years passed before the book came to be written, and, over this period of time, the book took on several different forms. Referred to as *Madame Tony Fréneuse* in *Henriette Maréchal*, the

[23] *La Tentation du roman sur rien* (Mont-de-Marsan: Éditions interuniversitaires, 1994), p. 203.
[24] See subsection 'Jules et Juliette' in Mireille Dottin-Orsini, 'Les Frères Goncourt et le "roman des actrices"', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 259 (2000), 55-74 (pp. 70-4).

novel, as mentioned above, is referred to once, in 1869, by the title *Femmes du monde* (*Journal*, 22 Sept. 1869, 2, p. 238). That which suggests that the author had decided to modify the title, and by extension, the novel, is that in 1878, six years before its publication and twelve years after its announcement, it is noted in the *Journal*: 'ma pensée allant au plan d'un roman qui raconterait la vie d'une jeune fille du second Empire' (14 Oct. 1878, 2, p. 800). This is certainly a more precise guideline than simply writing a novel that falls under the heading 'Bourgeois'. Despite the fact that the *Journal* between 1878 and 1884 is teeming with information and anecdotes that will eventually contribute to Edmond de Goncourt's ultimate novel, it is not until 1883 that the title is finalised. In 1882, Edmond notes, 'aujourd'hui, au milieu de mon malaise, écrit le titre du premier chapitre de mon roman de *Tony-Fréneuse* (titre provisoire)' (*Journal*, 16 Feb. 1882, 2, p. 925). It seems at this stage that Tony Fréneuse is indeed a character in the novel, but the status of this character is subject to change. This is an example of a particular to particular modification, as opposed to a general to particular modification. Through the title it is possible to glimpse the processes of creation which led to the final novel. What is of significance compared with the details provided in *Henriette Maréchal* is that the name is no longer preceded by a title, *Madame* having been dropped. This absence coincides with the first step in moving from a novel of a *femme du monde* to a novel depicting *filles du monde*. In fact, in 1884 Louis Desprez believed the book's title to be *La Petite-fille du maréchal* (cf. footnote 11). Two months after *Tony-Fréneuse* is announced as the provisional title, there is yet another refinement. The name Tony-Fréneuse remains unchanged, but the title *Mademoiselle* replaces the original (1866) *Madame*. Edmond writes in a letter to Alphonse Daudet: 'Oui, vraiment, *Mademoiselle Tony-Fréneuse*, ce n'est pas commode à faire, et je tourne autour du bouquin, sans oser entrer dedans' (*Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 142, 29 April 1882, p. 103). The title becomes more and more precise, and the main character evolves and gets ever younger, until eventually Chérie usurps Tony-Fréneuse's position, and the latter is relegated to a secondary status in the novel while

the former assumes the main role. Daudet writes 'l'on parlera beaucoup de *Chérie*' in June 1883, ten months before the book appears on the shelves. Edmond de Goncourt made it known, as will be shown shortly in the following chapter, that he wished, in writing *Chérie*, to write a novel devoid of plot and intrigues. The slow elimination of the proper name from the title of the novel confirms this desire, by giving the reader fewer and fewer points of reference. There is no greater proof of an absence of plot or intrigue as the absence of individual identity.

In both solo and joint works, the titles are not necessary to the writing of the novel, but they are central to an understanding of the final novel. While it cannot be concluded that the authors need a definitive title before work on the text can commence, it is evident that in the case of *Chérie*, for example, the title is modified as the central idea of the novel becomes more precise. What seems vital in pre-1870 works is the category into which the novel falls, and this is demonstrated by the preponderance of general to particular, or rhematic/generic to thematic, title changes.

As concerns the question of continuity between the two halves of the Goncourt *oeuvre*, it must be judged that the choice of subject matter, more so than the choice of titles, links the collective works to the solo works. As far as post-1870 works are concerned, only one of Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels is projected in *Henriette Maréchal* and it does not retain its original title. One other novel - *La Fille Élisa* (1877) - was planned by both Goncourts, and kept its title. The remaining two novels - *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879) and *La Faustin* (1882) - deal with subjects dear to both brothers, but are solely the work of the elder, and thus the evolution of their titles is extremely pertinent to a study of Goncourt's aesthetic. In the joint works, the title modifications are in the order of rhematic to thematic, and are always eponymous. Following the death of Jules, the titles are still chosen to reflect the central character of the novel, but in this case they reflect a change in emphasis and a move away from strict representations of reality. *Les Frères Zemganno* replaces one

that had designated an actual being, Bendigo; *La Faustin* has symbolic resonance; and *Chérie*, while being the name of the protagonist, is also an intimate, yet universal, name, a 'nom de pure caresse' (*Chérie*, p. 32). The post-1870 titles do not follow the bipartite formula of pre-1870 novels, and indeed there seems to be no rule governing their length.

What would remain to be undertaken is a comparative study of mid- to late-nineteenth-century 'titrology', in order to ascertain how titles and title changes reflect the dominant literary aesthetic, and tensions within this position. One important point remains clear, however: whether representative of an empirical figure or an imaginary creation, every Goncourt title is eponymous, and this tendency appears almost unique to the two brothers. Although the choice of eponymous titles fits into a general pattern of nineteenth-century 'titrology' - earlier authors including Balzac, Sand and Stendhal all used names as titles - it in no way mirrors exactly the choices of Edmond de Goncourt or his brother's contemporaries. Zola used eponymous titles for certain works, but these are limited in number. *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat* are pre-*Rougon-Macquart* titles; and, apart from *Nana*, those titles that do use names qualify them: *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, *Le Docteur Pascal*, *Son excellence Eugène Rougon*. Huysmans, before writing his Decadent novels such as *À Rebours*, made use of eponymous titles such as *Marthe* and *Les Sœurs Vatard*. The titles of Edmond de Goncourt's novels bear witness to a desire to focus on individual realities, and not necessarily 'Realist' realities, over Naturalist categorisation of typical ways of behaving. In the differences in the manner in which titles are modified in joint and solo works, clues emerge as to how the elder brother's aesthetic and ideological concerns evolve.

Chapter 2B
Paratexts
Prefaces: Writings on Literary History

That Edmond de Goncourt deemed his prefaces to be works of intrinsic value, outside any association with the novels for which they were written, is attested to by the fact that in 1888 he published them collectively in a volume entitled *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*. Though Goncourt believed that they merited their own volume, this does not in and of itself justify a study of the prefaces without reference to the four novels in which they appear. However, it does suggest that a study of the prefaces as literary manifestos would prove worthwhile; after all, the Goncourts, or more particularly, Edmond de Goncourt, long asserted that they were 'chefs d'école',[1] but the brothers never wrote a manifesto proper. Equally important, as Hubert Juin argues, is the fact that the prefaces were written 'à un moment crucial de l'évolution du naturalisme'.[2] As such, the prefaces can be considered as discourses on the work of literature and its period. In addition, they help establish what Goncourt's conception of, and place within, the literary field in which he operated was. They demonstrate that the author was acutely aware of the 'enjeux' of the literary and cultural field. Goncourt, in his prefaces, offers a suggested writing as much as, if not more than, a suggested reading, of literary texts. These paratextual writings signal a very post-modern awareness of contemporary literary debates and this affects any examination of Goncourt's *œuvre*. Approaching the prefaces chronologically, beginning with *La Fille Élisa* (1877) and ending with *Chérie* (1884), shows how they are manifestations of a given period - the *fin-de-siècle* - and evidence of a progression through this period.

---

[1] 'Oui, oui, mon frère et moi avons mené un mouvement littéraire qui emportera tout, un mouvement qui sera aussi grand au moins que le mouvement romantique' (*Journal*, 31 March 1877, 2, p. 734).
[2] Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, ed. by Hubert Juin (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980 [1888]), p.7.

La Fille Élisa

The preface to *La Fille Élisa* (1877), with its five paragraphs, can be divided into two sections. The first section deals primarily with the development of literature and the role of the prefacer/author within this development. The second section, which consists of paragraphs four and five, discusses prostitution and prisons, in order to prevent criticism of the novel's subject matter. The preface begins with an historico-literary reference to the *œuvre* of the Goncourt brothers. Interestingly, however, the reference, which is cited and reproduced in the text - 'il y a treize ans, nous écrivions en tête de *Germinie Lacerteux*' (p. 1) - points not only to one of the brothers' fictional works, but to its preface. As such, the preface to Edmond de Goncourt's first solo novel opens with an autotextual reference which situates the novel vis-à-vis his previous works and a prestigious and renowned piece of paratextual writing.

It is important to note that rather than analysing *Germinie Lacerteux*, Goncourt is concerned with analysing what the book's function, based on its preface, was. In the lines that follow the extract from the 1865 preface, the prefacer links his 1865 novel to the contemporary literary situation and makes brave and robust claims about the novel he is presenting to the public. However, as the prefacer himself acknowledges, these claims are not new, they are the same as were made in *Germinie Lacerteux*; Goncourt demands the same liberties and freedoms - the right to write about the working classes, notably - which were demanded in 1865. Hubert Juin goes so far as to argue that all post-*Germinie Lacerteux* prefaces 'perpétuent et accusent les proclamations contenues dans *Germinie Lacerteux*'.[3] According to this interpretation, the *Germinie Lacerteux* preface is nothing if not a literary manifesto and it is a manifesto that one critic has called a 'garantie experimentale' or, in other words, a vow that scientific discovery would motivate literary invention.[4] The consequence of

[3] *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, p. 1.
[4] Pierre Citti, 'La Préhistoire gagne le champ littéraire' in *Le Champ littéraire*, ed. by P. Citti and M. Détrie (Paris: J. Vrin, 1992), pp. 63-74 (p. 65).

this initial presentation is that *La Fille Élisa* is presented as the conclusion to a decade-old literary struggle in which the author has been engaged: 'ces libertés et ces franchises, je viens seul, et une dernière fois peut-être, les réclamer hautement et bravement pour ce nouveau livre, écrit dans le même sentiment de curiosité intellectuelle et de commisération pour les misères humaines' (p. 1).

Central to an understanding of the preface to *La Fille Élisa* (and perhaps the novel), then, is a familiarity with the literary struggle to which the author refers in the opening line of the preface. Consequently, several questions - questions which will be addressed in more depth in a later section - are raised, not the least of which is 'to whom is this preface addressed?'. The answer, it would seem, is to a sophisticated reader, perhaps even to other authors.

By invoking the spectre of intellectual curiosity, Goncourt refers to the debate surrounding the evolution, and future, of literature and art in the nineteenth century (in general terms, the move away from Romanticism and towards Realism and Naturalism, as well as the author's right to study and represent all levels of society based on the belief that all levels of society are equal before scientific methodology). This invocation is, therefore, a manner of justifying certain aesthetic choices. The second sentiment mentioned in the above-cited passage from *Germinie Lacerteux* and on which Goncourt apparently draws in his novel, is 'commisération' for human misery. This sentiment falls squarely into the realm of the social, if not emotional, and suggests that social art or art with didactic or moralistic ulterior motives - as opposed to art which has purely aesthetic value - is being presented in the novel. The result is a blurring of the line that separates pure and engaged art in general, but more importantly, as we shall see, the link between these two types of art in *La Fille Élisa* and in Goncourt's *œuvre*.

A clarification regarding the type of novel with which the reader is confronted is found in the lines following the citation from *Germinie Lacerteux*. In these lines the author refers explicitly to 'ce livre' and the adjectives used to describe *La Fille Élisa* are words rarely employed to entice a reader to read a work of fiction: 'austère', 'chaste', 'triste' (p. 1). On the other hand, the reader is told that the subject matter is 'brûlante' (p. 1), a term which implies urgency, importance and interest. To reinforce the sense of seriousness of purpose which has thus far surrounded the preface to *La Fille Élisa*, the author notes that he has approached his subject as would a doctor, a 'savant', an historian. These three voices which Goncourt assumes are not, however, the result of a choice: 'il m'a été impossible parfois de ne pas parler comme un médecin, comme un savant, comme un historien' (p. 1). The scientist or historian, as we will see in the 'document humain' chapter, is a typical comparison for Realist and Naturalist authors. Balzac, for instance, makes it in the preface to *La Comédie humaine* and Zola in the *Roman expérimental*. The author makes himself out to be everything except a novelist and is driven, obliged, to write in this anti-novelistic fashion. Science is thus presented as a way in which to bury all that is novelistic - that is to say, imaginative, romantic, and whimsical - about the novel.

When Edmond de Goncourt writes 'je viens seul' (p. 1), this can be interpreted in one of two ways: either he is reminding the reader that he is writing without his brother, Jules, or, he is stating that he is the only author to make these particular demands of literature. There is further confusion between the Goncourts and their society when the pronoun 'nous' is used not to replace 'my brother and I', but to indicate that the prefacer/novelist belongs to a group: 'nous, la jeune et sérieuse école du roman moderne' (p. 1). The use of this pronoun signals the passage from the particular to the general, from an individual continuing a battle which began with *Germinie Lacerteux*, to a school of the modern novel, which was perhaps founded on the

example of *Germinie Lacerteux*.[5] To accentuate the seriousness of the task with which this school is faced, Goncourt says that it would be 'injurieux' for the artists, and, by extension, their art, to have recourse to any form of self-censorship which would prevent them from writing on the same subjects which people outside the world of literature can include in an 'étude'. This displaces the boundaries of both the 'étude' and the novel as genres. It is at one and the same time an apology for literature's wanderings into outside domains in the hopes of increasing the truth content of fiction and a rejection of the intellectual hierarchy which both situates so-called artistic subjects above so-called scientific ones and considers these two terms as mutually exclusive.[6] This debate informs all aspects of Goncourt's aesthetic. The scientific and the artistic are in a constant state of flux and the result of this constant shifting is a pseudo-scientific art which draws on both universal and objective scientific truths as much as on individual and subjective means of expression. The balance between these two elements is the focus of this thesis.

One of the most immediately striking features of the preface to *La Fille Élisa* is the use of personal pronouns. So frequently are these pronouns employed, that their effect is hypnotic. The reader does not question the prefacer's status because he is so present; the prefacer's voice is the voice of authority, the voice of the author of *Germinie Lacerteux* and the voice of a new school of authors. In the fourth paragraph (part of section two), however, the prefacer briefly assumes another voice and proleptically speaks as would his critics. This passage rejects the suggestion that all contemporary novels are salacious and that the more base the subject matter, the more immoral the author. There is a thinly veiled reference in this paragraph to a work which was deemed outrageous - *La Dame aux camélias* - while the mention of

[5] Zola, for example, writes that '*Germinie Lacerteux*, dans notre littérature contemporaine, est une date. Le livre fait entrer le peuple dans le roman'. 'Edmond et Jules de Goncourt' in *Du Roman: sur Stendhal, Flaubert et les Goncourt*, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Brussels: Complexe, 1989), pp. 247-284 (p. 274). Rémy de Gourmont writes that 'tout le naturalisme, en sa partie populaire, vient de *Germinie Lacerteux*'. *Le Deuxième livre des masques* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1917), p. 265.

[6] 'Comme si, cependant, l'art et la science n'étaient pas dans l'histoire éternelle et vivante contradiction l'un de l'autre'. Ferdinand Brunetière, *Le Roman naturaliste* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1982), p. 6.

'lorettes' is perhaps an intertextual reference to the Goncourt brothers' work *La Lorette*. The idea that it would be dangerous to write a study of prostitutes and prostitution is dismissed (at this stage the subject matter of *La Fille Élisa* is yet to be revealed). It is only in the fifth and final paragraph that it is announced that the novel deals with prostitution. It is stated that *La Fille Élisa* will have two focal points, the first being the prostitute; the second, which is of more interest, according to the prefacer, is the prisoner. Goncourt insists that prostitution is a pretext for the study of the French penitential system and thereby pre-empts critics who would accuse him of baseness. Any negative comments or condemnations by critics are, therefore, invalidated before the novel begins.

A further defence is offered: the novel is presented as a 'plaidoyer' intended to 'donner à réfléchir' (p. 2) and touch people emotionally. This clarifies one of the issues raised above regarding the juxtaposition between socially engaged art and purely aesthetic art (or art for art's sake): *La Fille Élisa*'s preface claims that the novel is a 'plaidoyer' and not simply an artistic representation of prostitution. Its author, it is suggested, is neither immoral nor base because he has written a novel which is meant to edify, he has written a novel which has a specific social function. There is, of course, the possibility that the author is simply saying this to silence his vociferous and numerous critics,[7] and that he does not, in fact, have laudable aims. But, the tone of the preface suggests that the novel, as well as the preface, is an exhortation, a call to action.

Although certain elements of the novel have been introduced, the reader still does not know for what the prefacer is pleading. This is dealt with further on where it is announced that the issue at stake is 'la pénalité du *silence continu*' (p. 2) which

[7] For example, Ferdinand Brunetière and Edmond Tarbé, the latter of whom reacted to *La Fille Élisa* in an article which appeared in *Le Gaulois*. See Gérard Delaisement's presentation of *La Fille Élisa* (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1990), p. 18.

Goncourt sarcastically and vehemently calls, in a torrent of accumulated anaphoric condemnations:

> Oui! Cette pénalité du *silence continu*, ce perfectionnement pénitentiaire, auquel l'Europe n'a pas osé cependant emprunter ses coups de fouet sur les épaules nues de la femme, cette torture sèche, ce châtiment hypocrite allant au-delà de la peine édictée par les magistrats et tuant pour toujours la raison de la femme condamnée à un nombre limité d'années de prison, ce régime américain et non français, ce système Auburn, j'ai travaillé à le combattre avec un peu de l'encre indignée qui au dix-huitième, a fait rayer la torture de notre ancien droit criminel (pp. 2-3).

The tone lurches from sarcasm to indignation and is set and accentuated by the repetition of the pronouns 'ce' and 'cette'. The law which submits female prisoners to silence is condemned as being not only non-French, but anti-French and anti-Revolutionary. Eighteenth-century authors are praised for bringing positive change to a system that allowed torture. Interestingly, Goncourt manipulates different political views in order to persuade both his detractors and those who would uphold this law. Change is both positive and negative. As a treatise on justice, therefore, *La Fille Élisa* is presented as transcending mere political divisions: it represents a higher cause.

The reverse order of the preface is emphasised in the last lines of the text. It is here, in what could be termed the closing remarks, that the move from the general to the specific is brought to its logical conclusion. Goncourt does not want the debate on prostitution and imprisonment to take place only in the novel. On the contrary, his goal is to incite individual readers to develop an active interest in the contemporary French penitential system and the madness which it spawns. He wishes to soften the hearts of legislators and amend their illusory justice. The question the critic must ask is whether the book would have accomplished this had the preface not set forth detailed instructions on how it should be interpreted.

The theme of the past is central to this preface and has two facets. In the first instance, there is the past as it relates to Goncourt's *œuvre*; in the second instance, there is the past as it relates to less personal and more communal issues, such as the development of French law, society, and most importantly, literature. There is reference to personal history (the history of the Goncourts' *œuvre*), and shared history which includes literary history (references to Musset, eighteenth-century authors), political history (republicanism, greatness of France), and social history (justice, law, reading habits). There are also numerous references to the present which create a sense of progress vis-à-vis the historical aspects of the text. Interestingly, though, when the author includes himself in the 'jeune et sérieuse école du roman moderne' (p. 1) he offers no explanation as to who the members of this school are, nor what position he occupies within it (though the fact that he is in a position to offer advice would indicate that he is in a position of power and authority). This could usefully be compared to the preface to *Thérèse Raquin*. A further theme which arises is the scission between social art and art for art's sake, as *La Fille Élisa*, unlike its successors, seems largely concerned – at least in the preface - with the former. It is this fissure, the balance between scientific method and aesthetic representation, that haunts Edmond de Goncourt's three later novels.

Les Frères Zemganno

The preface to *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879) consists of five paragraphs and can be usefully divided into three sections. The first section (paragraphs one and two) presents the struggle for the future of literature. The second section compares the merits and difficulties involved in representing two distinct social 'types': the worker and the Parisian. The third section focuses on the prefacer/author's literary creation and touches briefly on *Les Frères Zemganno* itself. This preface is clearly addressed to 'les jeunes' and the legitimacy of the prefacer's role as guide is established through frequent reference to his career.

The first paragraph of the preface can be likened to a war cry, so military is the vocabulary: 'combats', 'victoire', 'avant-garde', 'bataille', 'terrain', 'tués' (p. 1). The war in question is the battle waged by Zola via *L'Assommoir* (1877) and the Goncourt brothers via *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865). These two works, as the reference to 'des *Assommoir*' and 'des *Germinie Lacerteux*' indicates, are treated as defining a specific type of fiction. In this opening sentence, *Germinie Lacerteux*, and hence the Goncourts' *œuvre*, is linked to the rollicking success of *L'Assommoir*, which had sold over 100,000 copies by 1882.[8] The author asserts, however, that while these two novels may have been successful, the battle for the soul of Realism, Naturalism, and studies after nature, will not end with them. By invoking the spectre of Realist and Naturalist literary schools, Goncourt draws on the public's knowledge of contemporary literary and aesthetic crusades and situates his work - past, present, and future - within these parameters. Nonetheless, a certain ambivalence is created due to the fact that in referring to *Germinie Lacerteux*, Goncourt does not directly name himself as its author, rather, in an attempt at objectivity, he refers to himself and his brother in the third person as 'les auteurs'. Likewise, use of all three terms - 'du réalisme, du naturalisme, de l'*étude d'après nature* en littérature' (p. 1) - accentuates the turbulence of the literary scene at the time, as though the author could neither choose, nor distinguish between, the three phrases. Perhaps, for the prefacer, these terms all have essentially the same meaning, or perhaps it indicates that none of the three categories has, as of the moment of writing, claimed supremacy over the others.

Having presented the reader with a battlefield, it is left to the author to name an enemy. The enemy is defined as 'le classicisme' (p. 1), but, as for some readers this term might be limited to a seventeenth-century phenomenon, Goncourt adds 'et sa

[8] Christophe Charle, *La Crise littéraire à l'époque du naturalisme: roman, théâtre et politique; essai d'histoire sociale des groupes et des genres littéraires* (Paris: Presses de l'école normale supérieure, 1979), p. 43.

queue', which has the effect of prolonging classicism into the present day and insinuates that the Classic aesthetic doctrine has never entirely faded. Is this a jibe at all that in the nineteenth century represents the established literary and cultural order? A criticism of the conservative notions and received ideas that Goncourt and other authors felt pervaded the Académie Française and the *Revue des deux mondes*, for example?[9] Once the problem has been presented, or the enemy named, the next step is to establish how it can be banished. The manner in which to put an end to classicism is to apply the same techniques and devices used to popular acclaim in the two novels already referred to - *Germinie Lacerteux* and *L'Assommoir* - but to describe the sophisticated environment of 'les femmes du monde, dans des milieux d'éducation' (p. 1), as opposed to a lower-class environment. By insisting that the 'analyse cruelle' (p. 1) of *Germinie Lacerteux* and *L'Assommoir* is the weapon with which to wage the final literary combat ('la grande bataille'), the author sets these two works on a pedestal and insists on the fact that firstly, they founded a literary movement - be it Realism, Naturalism, or studies after nature - and secondly, and as a result, that they are the central works from which all new fiction must spring. Either way, this intertextual reference makes another of Goncourt's novels an essential point of reference for the reader of *Les Frères Zemganno*, and this is a tactic that was also, as shown above, deployed in the preface to *La Fille Élisa*. Where this strategy differs from the prefatorial norm is that it has not, up to this point, suggested a reading of the novel at hand, *Les Frères Zemganno*.

The second paragraph begins with the word 'ce', and immediately consolidates what was written in the first paragraph. 'Ce' introduces a term which defines the novel of the future as described earlier: 'ce roman réaliste de l'élégance' (p. 1). 'Réaliste', in this case, refers to the manner in which the novel is written, and 'élégance' appears to

[9] They would merit this jibe because, as Charle points out, traditional critics felt threatened 'parce qu'ils sentent que la littérature légitime est menacée par une littérature qui vise un large public, sans renoncer à ses prétensions littéraires ni ses implications sociales'. *La Crise littéraire à l'époque du naturalisme*, p. 84. Brunetière goes as far as stating that 'c'est une préoccupation mauvaise et prétention systématique de bouleverser les règles éternelles de l'art'. *Le Roman naturaliste*, p. 2.

refer to the subject matter of the novel; 'élégance' could, however, equally refer to the style of the novel. The Goncourts' *œuvre* is mentioned again in this paragraph, though this time, in a discussion of what the brothers did not accomplish, Edmond explicitly names his brother: 'Ce roman réaliste de l'élégance, ça avait été notre ambition à mon frère et à moi de l'écrire' (p. 1). Statements of this kind are another means of situating the role of the Goncourts' *œuvre* in the literary struggles of the time: they would have liked to write of 'femmes du monde', but they were duty-bound, by their environment, both cultural and literary, to paint the 'bas de la société' (p. 1). This positioning tactic, or this will to explain an *œuvre*, is a theme which arose in the preface to *La Fille Élisa* and which, as will be demonstrated, arises in the preface to *Chérie* as well.

The military theme with which the preface commenced is maintained in the second paragraph by the use of words such as 'drapeau' and 'mission'. At the same time, one sentence dissects the term 'Realism' which was presented, uncapitalised, in the opening lines of the preface. On its second appearance in the text the word is capitalised: 'Réalisme'. This is paradoxical because on first mention the impression is given that *Germinie Lacerteux* and *L'Assommoir* founded a school of writing, but in the first paragraph neither Realism nor Naturalism is capitalised. This suggests that they are not in fact schools or genres, but simply ways of designating a certain way of writing. In the second reference, on the other hand, a formal entity is presented - 'Réalisme'- but no sooner is this entity introduced than it is devalued and downgraded to a mere 'mot bête', a 'mot drapeau'. The text goes on to describe the aesthetic elegance that is equally the other side of the Goncourtian aesthetic: 'écriture *artiste*', 'ce qui est élevé, ce qui est joli', 'ce qui sent bon', '[des] êtres raffinés et des choses riches' (p. 1). The first term in this list is 'écriture *artiste*', and it establishes a link to, and accentuates the elegance of, the 'roman réaliste de l'élégance' (p. 1). In this way 'écriture *artiste*' is intimately linked to Goncourt's conception of the future of the novel, as will be seen in the preface to *Chérie*, and is also linked to an art which is

not born of authorial obligation. That 'écriture artiste', a style developed by - or, at the very least, named by - Edmond, and Jules, de Goncourt, enables authors to write of refined subjects, as well as to elevate base subjects, is a demonstration of its malleability. The Goncourts did not initiate a literary school based on subject matter, because their method of writing, their style, enables them to write of anything. It would, therefore, be wrong for young writers to think that the future of the novel lay in subject matter alone. 'Écriture artiste' can spawn 'une étude appliquée, rigoureuse, non-conventionnelle et non-imaginative de la beauté' (p. 1). It is a rigorous, scientific and investigative manner of thinking, of writing, of creating, and this recalls Zola's theorisation of the novel in *Le Roman expérimental.* Where Zolian Naturalism places scientific method first and argues that many styles are possible within Naturalist writing, the preface to *Les Frères Zemganno* postulates the opposite: style should come a joint first with method.

At the beginning of the second section (paragraph three), Goncourt anticipates the question that his readers and critics will have formulated and asks it rhetorically. This stylistic device allows the author to explain why he has chosen not to write the 'roman réaliste de l'élégance' (p. 1). He states that 'nous' - which could well refer to Edmond and Jules, or indeed to all writers involved in the same movement as the Goncourts and Zola - started writing about the lower classes due to the fact that it was easier. In the lines that follow, the subjects are treated as types: 'la canaille', 'le Parisien'. The 'canaille' - derogatory term which belies the author's objectiveness - is both simple-minded and wild because it lives closer to nature than high society. The 'canaille' is far from complicated, while the civilised Parisian is, like a painting, nuanced and full of 'demi-teintes' (pp. 2-3). The Parisian 'se façonne', creates attitudes and personalities. The difference between these two groups or social realities is the difference between pre and post-1870 novels and, more generally, the difference between Naturalism and Decadence. Further explanation of the difficulties inherent in any study of refined milieux is offered by the prefacer and the method to

follow in order to write a novel of the Parisian is detailed. It involves 'immenses emmagasinements d'observations, d'innombrables notes prises à coups de lorgnon...l'amassement d'une collection de documents humains' (pp. 2-3). The enormity of the task, and thus the superiority of the author who attempts and completes it, is underlined by the use of these terms of quantity. The list of problems involved in the writing of such a novel reinforces a statement made earlier in the preface that the new literature of the upper classes need not be a literature of imagination; on the contrary, it will be 'non imaginative' as the author's laborious research into the complexities of Parisian high-life suggests. This seems to refer to the scientificity of the creative project. The amassed documents contribute to the novel's *vraisemblance* and truth, and reduce the role of the imaginary. This is a point that Goncourt stresses as if he were an orator: 'disons le bien haut; les documents humains font les bons livres: les livres où il y a de la vraie humanité' (p. 3). This conception of truth and 'la vraie humanité' puts a certain distance between Realistic novels and Romantic novels.

In the third and final section Goncourt once again discusses his association with the 'new' literature, though this time, he states that he had, in fact, started work on 'ce projet'. Now, however, Goncourt is too old to complete the project, even though he has contemplated it since Jules' death. This is a first reference to Edmond's age and this sort of temporal reference is a recurring theme in future prefaces. It is perhaps significant that age is first mentioned in the presentation of the first novel that he conceived of entirely on his own (*La Fille Élisa* was the idea of both the brothers). This reference to age implies that, as the author is too old to innovate, the reader's expectations should not be too elevated with regard to *Les Frères Zemganno*. In other words, *Les Frères Zemganno* should not be judged on the basis of the theory of the novel expounded by Goncourt in the preface. This strategy of *captatio benevolentiae* elicits the reader's sympathy by stressing the author's modesty. After this confession of relative inadequacy, Goncourt reveals the purpose of the preface

by summarising all that has been said thus far: the young generation of authors is advised to abandon the baseness of *Germinie Lacerteux* and *L'Assommoir* and concentrate on elegance and refinement. This clearly anticipates the Decadent movement. Here, the author is playing the role of guide, the role of mentor. In order for his and Zola's innovations not to perish, people must understand that use of 'documents humains' and studies after nature are ways of writing and are therefore applicable to all manner of subjects, not just base ones. It is worth noting that Zola had already studied high class life in *La Curée* (1871), so the extension of the Naturalist project is not so clear cut.

Having revealed his aims, in the closing section of the preface, the author mentions for the first time the novel which it introduces. *Les Frères Zemganno* is not a novel of the 'canaille', nor is it a 'roman réaliste de l'élégance'; rather, it is 'une tentative de réalité poétique' (p. 3). Thus, after exhorting the new generation of authors that human documents are the only effective and reliable way to uncover truth, it is asserted that *Les Frères Zemganno* was written because its author was tired of the very truth he has written of in previous novels, 'la vérité trop vraie' (p. 4). As an 'écrivain contemporain' in communion with his readers, Goncourt paradoxically suffers from the novels that he and his contemporaries create. Goncourt situates himself within two worlds, that of the reading public and that of the authors of 'la réalité brutale' (p. 3). In addition to alluding to his link to both the public and to other artists, Goncourt invokes his personal state of health. Truth makes him 'malade nerveusement' (p. 3) and *nervosité* is one of the Goncourts' - and the Decadents' - best known characteristics.

The closing paragraph explains the author's physical state (which fits in with the theme of old age) and, by extension, the reasons for which he wrote *Les Frères Zemganno* in the fashion that he did. Goncourt is 'vieillissant', 'maladif', 'lâche devant le travail' (p. 4); that is to say he is too old to give birth to new children, too old to

continue the battle evoked in the first section of the preface. Like the public, he has no taste left for 'la vérité trop vraie' of his previous novels. References to the author's age and *oeuvre* automatically signal a progression or a conception of progress. It is implied that the Goncourt brothers wrote several novels which were so powerful to read, and draining to write, that one of the brothers died of his effort, and the survivor is compelled for reasons of health and sanity, to write of another reality. The nature of this alternative reality is exposed as being 'de l'imagination dans du rêve mêlé à du souvenir' (p. 4). Thus, in the final line of the preface, three new categories - 'imagination', 'rêve', 'souvenir' - are introduced. These categories do not coincide with what the prefacer stated was meritorious about his previous novels and with the theory of literature expounded up to this point in the preface. The terms are original insofar as they are left unexplained and the reader, therefore, is left to surmise their meaning as well as the meaning and subject matter of *Les Frères Zemganno*.

The preface to Edmond de Goncourt's second solo novel does very little to explain the novel. There is no recommended reading of the novel, though there is a reading of two other novels (*Germinie Lacerteux* and *L'Assommoir*). The author does not argue that the novel belongs to a literary ideal. On the contrary, in the first section (made up of the first two paragraphs) the author offers a reading of the modern novel to date, evokes his past successes and links them to the much more publicly acclaimed successes of Zola. The new generation of writers is then offered advice as to where the future of the novel lies. The prefacer asserts that he will play no active part in these changes. The first section of the preface stakes Goncourt's claim as the theoretician of the new novel, and as an acclaimed novelist of the older generation. He straddles what some would call first and second generation Naturalism.[10] In the middle section, different 'types' are discussed in relation to their fictional

[10] In his book, Charle devotes a chapter to what he refers to as second generation Naturalism, in which he includes authors such as Rosny, Descaves, Geffroy, Bonnetain (several of whom were later members of the Académie Goncourt) who were born between 1856 and 1861. See also David Baguley's 'Histories' chapter in *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), particularly pp. 20-8, where he discusses younger Naturalists.

representation. In the third section of the preface, Goncourt introduces new categories which have little relation to those discussed with regard to the future of literature. This saves the author from criticism based on his own theories, and from accusations of failure. People can disagree with the theory of the novel expounded in the preface, or they can dislike the novel that is prefaced, but they cannot judge the novel on the basis of the preface.

La Faustin

The preface to *La Faustin* is the shortest of the prefaces to Edmond de Goncourt's four novels. It begins by comparing the role of the historian to the role of the author and then relates this comparison to the role of the modern author. Where the preface to *La Faustin* (1882) differs from most other prefaces is that it does not introduce *La Faustin* to the reading public, as might seem logical; rather, it anticipates a future novel. The tone of the preface is very familiar and establishes an intimate rapport between writer and reader. The need for this intimate rapport only becomes clear in the closing lines of the text.

The *La Faustin* preface opens with the word 'aujourd'hui' and this immediately alerts the contemporary - that is to say nineteenth-century - reader to the actuality or relevance of the subject at hand. An opposition is quickly established in the text, as 'aujourd'hui' is followed by 'historien', and this underlines the paradox of the writer of history who operates in both present and past. The mixing of eras is furthered by the use of the verb 'se préparer' which implies preparation for a future event. The first clause of the first sentence of the preface to *La Faustin* demands a willingness to be guided through the author's thoughts as one would be guided through time and this sets a suitable backdrop for the comparison of historian and author which follows: 'Aujourd'hui lorsqu'un historien se prépare à écrire un livre sur une femme du passé' (p. 1).

In order to write the history of a given woman, the historian must draw upon several sources and this is pointed up by the structure of the second clause of the sentence where 'à tous' is twice repeated. This structure establishes a link between the phrases which follow 'à tous'. Thus, 'détenteurs intime de la vie de cette femme' and 'les possesseurs de petits morceaux de papier' (p. 1) are grammatically intertwined. As a consequence, pieces of paper reveal the intimate life of the subject being studied. This materialist interpretation of history is given its full expression in the closing clause of this opening sentence, where it can be concluded that the object - the paper - lives and tells the story of an 'âme' which has died: objects live and breathe, and, for this historian and author, subjects cannot exist independently of the objects that attest to the subject's existence.

The second sentence of the preface mirrors the first sentence insofar as it begins with a temporal reference followed by reference to a craft: 'à l'heure actuelle...romancier' (p. 1). The structure of the two sentences sets up a linguistic parallel between their parts. For the benefit of those who might not have grasped this idea through style alone, the parallel is concretised in what appears to be merely an aside, an afterthought, due to the fact that it appears in parentheses, but which is in fact central to Goncourt's argument, or possibly even to his aesthetic in general: 'un romancier (qui n'est au fond qu'un historien des gens qui n'ont pas d'histoire)' (p. 1). The historical being is created in the text by calling upon the material traces or, 'détenteurs de la vie intime', of a life; the fictional being is invented by conjuring 'souvenirs vivants' that are 'tout prêts à venir', as opposed to 'd'incomplets fragments de lettres et de journaux' (p. 1). There is no denying that this mention of 'souvenirs' is autotextual and might clarify the use of the same term in the preface to *Les Frères Zemganno* (might 'souvenirs' be the author's own personal 'documents humains'? This is explored in chapter 2 B).

There is a change in tone when the prefacer writes 'je m'explique'. This signals both the presence of the writer and his willingness to clarify his thoughts, as if the preface were an exchange of information (but, of course, it cannot be a two-way process). This marks a transition from general reflections on the similarities between historians and authors towards a more motivated discussion of the author's novelistic desires and plans. In the explanation of what kind of novels the author wishes to write, two weighty terms - 'psychologique et physiologique' (p. 1) - are introduced, are left undefined, and are modified (and their significance is reduced) by the word 'simplement'. All of these words gather around the central word of this phrase: 'étude'. The importance of this term lies in the fact that it transforms the novel in general (through Edmond's example) into something that it has not yet been, it gives the novel a new purpose, and this is highlighted by the use of the future tense in the sentence: 'je veux faire un roman qui sera simplement une étude psychologique et physiologique' (p. 1). 'Étude' is very ambiguous. It can be a study of something in a painterly sense, in which case its application to the novel suggests a focus on the documentary. Alternatively, it could be a technical exercise, as in music, in which case it implies concentration on style to the exclusion of other matters. Certainly, this would correspond to the increasing absence of sustained plot in later novels.

Once again the number of personal pronouns is striking. In this preface, however, the references to the prefacer's 'je' help foster a more intimate tone. This preface has the highest percentage of first person pronouns of all four, perhaps explained by the fact that it is a wish-list of things that could have been, and possibly still can be, accomplished. Their presence nonetheless lulls the reader into a state of complicity. In a similar vein, the use of the demonstrative adjective 'cette' to introduce the subject (the young girl) should indicate that the subject has already been referred to, but in this instance the subject has undergone a transformation. That which was referred to in the opening sentence of the preface as 'cette femme' has by this stage mutated, regressed into 'cette jeune fille'. In retrospect, this regressive transformation,

or reverse evolution, signals a change in Goncourt's *œuvre*. Where once he focused on 'femmes' (*Germinie Lacerteux*, *Manette Salomon*, *Madame Gervaisais*), he is now focusing on 'jeunes filles' (*Renée Mauperin*, *Chérie*). As a result, the move from 'cette femme' to 'cette jeune fille', already encountered in relation to title changes, can be interpreted as a commentary on the tendencies of Goncourt's *œuvre*, as well as being a commentary on the regression of the character Chérie. That the young girl is the object of an historical study is attested to by the fact that the author draws on (or should draw on) 'documents humains' and 'living memories', though it is not clear what the distinction between these two terms is. That the young girl is a specimen and the object of a study is proven by the fact that she grows up in an unnatural environment: like a rare species she is 'élevée' in a 'serre-chaude' - Paris - where people can observe her at their will by peering into her glass cage.

The tone of the preface changes abruptly when the prefacer suddenly starts a sentence using a spoken, if not altogether familiar style, and says, 'Eh bien'. This creates a sense that the individual reader is being addressed directly by the author of the preface, and that the prefacer is confiding something in his readers ('mes lectrices'). That which is confided is a lack. Studies, works or 'travaux' about women which are written by men are missing, according to the preface, an essential ingredient, just as the middle of the sentence is missing or is hiding a word or thought where there is an ellipsis: 'les livres écrits sur les femmes par les hommes, manquent, manquent... de la collaboration féminine' (p. 1). This historico-literary lacuna can be admitted because of the presumed sex of the reader ('lectrices') (Women are held in a different light in this preface compared to the preface to *La Fille Élisa*, where the author complains about having to write books for their amusement). The possibility that the author of the preface knows his readership, knows who reads his books, is hinted at by the continuation of the familiar, almost chatty, tone and by the double insistence on 'collaboration'. 'je serais désireux de l'avoir cette collaboration' (p. 1). The intimate tone fostered by the use of such

expressions as 'oui' and 'eh bien' gives the impression that collaboration will begin, or at the very least that acquiescence to the author's desires is taken for granted.

The next ruse used to gain the confidence, and by extension, the help of readers is flattery; for, stating that the women who read his books 'me font l'honneur de me lire', can surely be called nothing else. Once the prefacer has revealed whose help he needs, it is revealed what sort of help he does not need: he does not need any hints on adventures, romances or intrigues. This is logical, for why would the author of a psychological and physiological study have a need for anything that relied too heavily on imagination, especially bourgeois imagination. That the reader is aware of this is suggested by the use of the phrase 'bien entendu'. What follows these revelations is a detailed list of what women could usefully furnish him with. This list is six lines long and comprises eight separate requests. The originality and inter-connectedness of these demands is stressed by the link word 'mais', which precedes each new element in the list.[11] If the novelty of this subject matter were not sufficiently evident in list-form, then the remark '[ce] que les maris et même les amants passent leur vie à ignorer' (p. 2) surely indicates that the author wants to be the first to be privy to this information. The various elements of this list recall the discussion of refined environments in the preface to *Les Frères Zemganno*. There is an assumption, which is overturned in the novels themselves, as shall be argued in later chapters, that women know themselves, or are able to observe themselves and share their secrets. There is also an assumption that hitherto women have been hiding their true selves from men.

In the closing line of the preface, the preface-writer reveals to whom the preface is addressed, and, by extension, from whom he is soliciting information. That this is a

[11] Charles Bruneau remarks on the 'mouvements oratoires' of the prefaces which are caused by the repetition of certain words: et, et; mais, mais; avec, avec, etc. *Histoire de la langue française des origines à nos jours*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), 13: *L'Époque réaliste deuxième partie: la prose littéraire*, ed. by Charles Bruneau, p. 96.

logical sequence of events is illustrated by opening the sentence with the word 'et'. The entire preface plays on definitions of past, present, future. When the past 'remonte en elles' readers should note it down so as to make possible a future novel. No reading of *La Faustin* is offered. Indeed, *La Faustin* is all but ignored. The entire preface, from the intimate tone to the discussion of historians, is geared towards guaranteeing the creation of a future text. The writing sought is twofold: women will write to the author offering their intimate memories, and the author, in turn, will use these confessions to write his novel, *Chérie*.

Chérie

Goncourt's final novel, *Chérie* (1884), contains his longest preface. It can be divided into roughly five component parts, the fourth of which, the preface to the *Journal*, strays wildly outside the bounds of the imagined category 'preface-to-Chérie'. Unlike in the preface to *La Fille Élisa*, which only introduces its subject - the novel - in its closing lines, the preface to *Chérie* begins with a discussion of the novel in question and is marked by the presence of the author's 'je'. However, to emphasise the tight link between Edmond de Goncourt's two final novels, the opening sentence of the text makes explicit reference to *La Faustin* as well as to the work that the author has done since writing his penultimate novel. The presentation of *Chérie* is undertaken by referring to a past novel - indeed, like *La Fille Élisa*, to a past novel's preface - and this suggests that the reader of *Chérie* will already be acquainted with the subject matter of the book, as well as with the *œuvre* of Edmond de Goncourt. It also implies that Goncourt as preface-writer is persuasive because his request for female collaboration issued in *La Faustin* did not, presumably, go unheeded, for the novel announced earlier is now being presented. This tactic, this play between the two prefaces, introduces the theme of juggling between past, present and future which is manifest in this preface in particular, but equally in the interprefatorial nature of Goncourt's work as a whole.

A one-sentence description or summary of *Chérie*, which is atypical of Goncourt's prefaces, functions as a thesis statement. It underlines the assertion that *Chérie* is a serious - this is implied by the word 'étude' - 'monographie' (p. 1), that is to say that it has a single subject, a single focal point: a young woman's experience of the environment of the Rich and Powerful. In the preface to *La Faustin*, Goncourt had announced that *Chérie* would be completely contemporary in its subject matter, as it would be based on letters of the living. From the outset of *Chérie*'s preface, however, the ravages of time and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of writing the contemporary become apparent: the novel takes place under the Second Empire, a regime which had ended fourteen years prior to the publication of *Chérie*. In relation to 1884, therefore, the novel documents a now dead society, even if the members of this society now live in the 3rd Republic. This transformation of French political culture is addressed in the preface in what could be termed a lament: 'Pour le livre que je rêvais' (p. 1) - that is, the book introduced in *La Faustin*, and which the melancholy tone suggests was not writeable. This is followed by, firstly, an explanation of what would have been desirable in the novel, and, secondly, by an explanation as to why these desires were unachievable. As to what would have been preferable, this includes a milieu with more history, a milieu where social, as well as racial, it must be said, distinction - 'les sélections de race' - would lead to a novel that depicted 'un type à la distinction plus profondément ancrée dans les veines, à la distinction perfectionnée par plusieurs générations' (p. 1), and this both in terms of the quartier and its inhabitants. This wish belies a belief in the legitimacy of the pseudo-scientific apparatus associated with Naturalism - traits social, emotional and physical are shared by members of the same family, and environment contributes to the blossoming or uncovering of these traits (hence why it would have been better to use a young girl from the faubourg Saint-Germain as a model rather than a *Lorraine* transplanted to Paris). This was not possible in the case of Chérie because the type described no longer exists. That a type is being referred to is evidenced by the use of

'cette', 'cette jeune fille', even though the girl is nameless. The 'jeune fille' type belongs to the art of Balzac, or, as Goncourt writes, 'aux temps de la Restauration ou du règne de Louis-Philippe' (p. 1). The image of the female which the author wished to portray does not belong to the 'vie vivante' of the end of the century, rather she is a specimen to be studied by an author-historian. *Renée Mauperin* (1864), in contrast, was written during the Second Empire and portrays the 'modern' girl of this period.

Leaving behind the novel that could have been in favour of the novel that is, the reader is brought back to 'ce roman de *Chérie*' in paragraph four. *Chérie* is, in a sense, an historical novel, it is a novel 'écrit avec les recherches qu'on met à la composition d'un livre d'histoire' (p. 1). The numerous primary sources, as the historian might say, which contributed to the book - and to accentuate the importance of the book it is stated that few books have been so well-documented - include 'causeries', 'confidences' and 'confessions' (p. 1), all of which are feminine, in origin as well as in sphere of interest. These three terms are stereotypically linked to women, but are also intimately linked to each other by virtue of their alliterative qualities. This particular book about females is unique because of the contribution of females to its composition.

There are parallels between the preface to *Les Frères Zemganno* and this one. One of the professed aims of *Chérie* was to evoke 'le joli et le distingué' (p. 2) of its subject. This 'réalité élégante' is the same as that expressed in the 1879 preface. It does not follow from this notion of elegant reality that his character is an abstract, inhuman and asexual being. Characters who are 'mensongèrement idé[aux]' (p. 2) are more suited to popular novels, the sort of novels which have always been the same ('romans chic d'hier et d'aujourd'hui', p. 2). This suggests a belief in both an elite literature and an elite reading public that is gaining more and more prominence at the *fin-de-siècle*. Ironically, the elite literature of the day, *Chérie* included, portrays characters far removed from everyday reality and concerns.

The sixth paragraph, in addition to addressing the question of elitism, pre-empts critics and also consists of a discussion of literature, not so much theoretical or philosophical as 'reflections on' literature. The opening 'on' refers as much to the reading public as to literary critics. The author distances himself from his critics by specifying how his tastes differ from theirs - where critics will detect a lack of plot and intrigue, Goncourt purports to believe that the book is still too eventful for his liking. In addition, the use of the word 'fabulation' (p. 2) adds an interesting dimension to the discussion of *Chérie*. 'Fabulation' corresponds to an imaginary story which is in no way anchored in everyday reality. In a certain sense, therefore, the term 'fabulation' corresponds well to *fin-de-siècle* literature and works such as *Chérie*, literature which grew out of Naturalist typification and evolved into a literature of dream-like qualities, of a subjectivity where the reality of the characters bears little resemblance to the everyday reality of the average reader.

It is at this point in the preface that a shift in emphasis can be detected. The sixth paragraph is a transition paragraph in which the thematic axis moves from matters concerning *Chérie* to matters more general, to a discussion of the evolution of literature and changes, both past and present, in its status. One thing nonetheless remains constant: the author's wishful stance embodied in his awareness of the unstoppable forces of time. For example, he writes longingly: 'S'il m'était donné de redevenir plus jeune de quelques années, je voudrais [...]' (p. 2). As has been illustrated in the discussion of the other prefaces to Edmond de Goncourt's novels, their author is always keen to mention his old age. This preface is no exception to the rule, and the prefacer comments on the luck that allowed him access to the private realm of the female: 'bonnes fortunes littéraires arrivant, hélas! aux romanciers qui ont soixante ans sonnés' (p. 2).

The ambition, or wish, presented is to write a novel devoid of the novelistic, devoid of drama, to write a novel which could replace everyday reality in its very uneventfulness, in its very banality. Death and suicide would be banished from his *œuvre*, condemned as nothing more than *deus ex machina*, on the grounds that 'cette mort' which he calls forth to conclude his novels rarely concludes things in such a timely fashion in reality. Goncourt would prefer not to rely on death as a textual resolution. This is attested to in the language of ownership surrounding both death and the novel as topics in this passage of the preface: 'la mort, cette mort que j'emploie volontiers [...], je la rejetterais de mes livres' (p. 2). The reasons for the rejection of this convenient and expedient plot device are explained when Goncourt states that he is of the opinion that 'machination livresque' reached its apex under authors such as Sue and Soulié. The sentence then leaps from the early nineteenth-century novel to a prediction of what the novel might be at the end of the same century. There can be no doubt that this assessment of the novel's evolution sees the genre as occupying a pre-determined, or fixed, time-frame, or indeed that this conception is somehow fatalistic, foreseeing as it does the death of the traditional mimetic novel in much the same way as Nietzsche would tell of the death of God and Barthes of the death of the author. How else to interpret 'la dernière évolution du roman' than as a warning of the end of the progress of the novel through literary history. The novel must renew itself, must become 'le grand livre des temps modernes' (p. 2) by abandoning traditional cause and effect plot. In Goncourt's story of the future of (the history of) literature, it is at this point that the novel will cease to exist. In *Théorie des genres*, it is suggested that in order to define a genre, you must already have written the history of the genre and this is precisely what is taking place in this preface:[12] Goncourt, as prefacer, is writing a history of a genre, in order to define its limits and the extent of his influence on these limits. As one critic

[12] *Théorie des genres*, ed. by Gérard Genette and Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Seuil, 1986), p. 34.

formulates it: 'Se combinent ici un esprit critique aigu, un souci de modernité, et la volonté de se démarquer par des œuvres originales d'une tradition jugée épuisée'.[13]

In this section of the preface, the prefatorial voice alternates between that of historian and that of fortune-teller. A reading of literary history is offered, as are suggestions as to how one man's *œuvre* could be changed in order to better correspond to (advance, announce, anticipate) a development that he predicts. While Goncourt's *œuvre* cannot in fact be rewritten, because the author cannot regain his youth, it is stated that someone younger may one day 'find' the new name for the novel for which Goncourt was 'searching'. The suggestion is that even if another author creates or names a new genre, he will only be completing work begun by Goncourt, he will only be fulfilling a prophecy.

What appears to be a mere digression, the ranting of a reactionary old man about the ills of the masses, is, in effect, a more or less sophisticated analysis of the processes governing literary evolution. In a familiar, even jocular, tone, Goncourt warns (taking the opposite position from Chateaubriand) that considerations of the public's taste will play no part in determining what to write, just as it was stated above that he had no truck with the popular and chic novel. Clearly, the prefacer is of the view that, with regard to changes in what is today termed the literary field, the actions of the few exert enormous influence on the behaviour of the many. Artistic norms are called the 'catéchismes du beau' (p. 3), and this links art to religion, or perhaps more accurately, links art to dogma. There are rules governing tastes, but these rules vary according to a pattern: every thirty years the rules are toppled in favour of new beliefs. Art exists in a state of perpetual change - 'la marche et le renouvellement incessants et universels des choses du monde' (p. 3). This negates, or at the very

[13] Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau, *La Tentation du livre sur rien: naturalisme et décadence* (Mont-de Marsan: Éditions interuniversitaires, 1994), p. 105.

least, invalidates, the idea of permanence and fixed beliefs, 'l'immuabilité paresseuse de ses opinions toutes faites' (p. 3).

An insistent tone is kept throughout this section of the preface, as each paragraph begins with an emphatic word, many of which contain the final rhyme 'ons', thus binding the paragraphs together: 'Arrivons' (p. 3), 'Quoi!', 'Non' (p. 4), 'Puis, toujours, toujours' (p. 5), 'Répétons-le', 'Tâchons donc' (p. 6). In one paragraph, a paragraph which is, in effect, one protracted sentence, another tool is used to reinforce important points, and that tool is repetition: 'continuera à s'efforcer', 'continuera à vouloir', 'continuera à rechercher', 'continuera à courir après', 'continuera à ne pas se refuser', 'continuera à ne pas se rejeter' (p. 4). Another sentence insists: 'Puis, toujours, toujours', 'et toujours'. The general rule being presented is not programmatic, it is a rule of perpetual change.

The oral style continues in the next sentences where it emphasises the emotional importance of what is being said, where it allows the prefacer to respond with outrage to false accusations: 'Quoi! nous les romanciers...'(p. 4). Authors are called 'ouvriers' (p. 4), rather than 'artisans', and this is of some significance. These particular workers do not lower themselves to the 'langage omnibus des faits divers', rather they strive to create an individual voice that will differentiate them from their peers. The use of 'ouvrier' is significant due to the fact that it evokes images of time-consuming and strenuous manual labour that is not commonly associated with the work of literature. 'Artisan' would perhaps be the term that more naturally corresponded to the work of the author, as writing can be thought of as a craft, but 'ouvrier' is a loaded term that not only recalls past literary struggles, but alludes to changes in the literary field where literary creation is surpassed by literary production.[14] In Naturalist novels, workers were often displayed in their particular environment, and 'ouvrier' reminds the reader of the aims of this kind of literature,

[14] *La Tentation du livre sur rien*, p. 46.

literature from which Goncourt attempts to distance himself (Naturalism was criticised precisely for the vulgarity of speech and conduct of its characters), aims which would have remained unfulfilled had these particularities been ignored.

In the next paragraph, however, there is a swift change in tone away from schoolmaster-like rules towards more personal reflections in which the prefacer invokes both himself and his brother. From this paragraph to the preface to the *Journal*, the fourth, and most surprising section of the preface, roughly every tenth word is the pronoun 'je', 'nous', or 'mon/ma'.[15] This concentration of personal pronouns is characteristic of *Chérie*. Whereas in section three the reader is bombarded with first person pronouns, in section two there are virtually none. This is not to say that the author does not make his presence known. On the contrary, the difference is that in this instance the prefacer refers to himself and other *littérateurs* in the third person ('romancier'; 'lui'; 'sa'). The high frequency of pronouns in the preface to the *Journal*, which is included in *Chérie*, is justified by the subject matter: a diary where, necessarily, the text prioritises the author. The closing lines of the preface also contain many pronouns, and this because the prefacer is telling a story about his life.

The final section of the preface to *Chérie* opens with a highly romantic address to the novel: 'Maintenant, toi, petite CHÉRIE, toi pauvre dernier volume du dernier des Goncourt, va où sont allés tous tes aînés…' (p. 9). Like a parent whose child leaves home, Edmond de Goncourt releases his final offspring into the harsh world of literary competition, where every book must fend for itself. The conclusion of this preface takes the form of a lengthy passage of reported speech of Jules de Goncourt. As this is the case, Hubert Juin's statement regarding the prefaces is not entirely accurate:

[15] The are over 15 of these pronouns in just less than 200 words.

> Edmond note à deux reprises, dans ses préfaces, que son frère et lui eurent trois mérites: celui de faire paraître le vrai dans la littérature (c'est un propos un peu outré), d'avoir fait revivre le XVIIIe siècle (ce qui est véritable et vérifiable), d'avoir donné une impulsion décisive au 'japonisme' (ce qui est exact).[16]

What is interesting in the preface to *Chérie*, is that Edmond de Goncourt does not make these assertions; rather, Jules de Goncourt makes them in the passage of reported speech already mentioned. In the passage, Jules asks rhetorical questions of his brother, and provides the answers himself. Thus: 'Qu'est-ce qui a imposé à la génération aux commodes d'acajou, le goût de l'art et du mobilier du XVIIIe siècle?... Où est celui qui osera dire que ce n'est pas nous? Et de deux!' (p. 10). By means of this story, Edmond makes claims indirectly. All the perceived themes of the Goncourts' *œuvre* are addressed one after another, and these themes, the same themes enumerated by Juin, are said to be the 'trois grands mouvements littéraires et artistiques de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle' (p. 11). Jules made robust claims where Edmond appears more modest. The preface deals explicitly with the place of the Goncourts' *œuvre* in literary history and with their influences, but the prefacer at times distances himself from what would otherwise appear as boasting.

The Authority of the Preface

Several general characteristics of (and differences between) the Goncourt prefaces can be drawn from the textual analyses presented here. The most striking similarities include the formula employed to transmit the didactic message; the theme of age, which is intimately bound to the status of the author in literary circles and the role of the prefacer and the 'prefacee'; the opposition between both science and imagination, and history and fiction; and, finally, the play between past, present and future. The prefaces accentuate novelty and the pre-eminent role of the Goncourt brothers in the

[16] *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, p. 6.

arts while simultaneously rejecting permanent aesthetic consecration in favour of an awareness of the constant evolution of literature.

What is arguably the most comprehensive theoretical study of prefaces and their functions is Gérard Genette's *Seuils*. As the title of this work suggests, prefaces are a threshold. By virtue of their physical position, they stand between an author and a text, and they stand between a reader and a reading. Thanks to the distinctions made in *Seuils*, it is possible to talk in general terms of some of the characteristics of the prefaces to *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882), and *Chérie* (1884).

To begin, all four prefaces are 'auctorial', which is to say that all four prefaces were composed by the author of the novels in which they appear. This is evident for two principal reasons. Firstly, the prefaces are either signed (*Chérie* and *Les Frères Zemganno*), dated (*La Fille Élisa*) or both (*La Faustin*). Secondly, had they not been signed or dated, they are nevertheless written with such familiarity with the Goncourt *œuvre* that it would be assumed that Goncourt and the prefacer were one and the same. As for the addressee of the prefaces, Genette describes their role as follows: '[la détermination du destinataire] se réduit presque à ce truisme: le destinataire de la préface est le lecteur du texte'. He adds the supplementary comment that this supposes 'une lecture imminente'.[17] While it is no doubt correct that the addressee is the reader, it is perhaps too simplistic to accommodate a reading of specific prefaces. For, while the addressee is necessarily the reader of the preface, he is not necessarily the reader of the primary text. The preface to *Chérie*, for instance, was published in its own right in *Le Figaro* on 17 April 1884, on the same day that the novel was published. The novel, on the other hand, was serialised in *Gil Blas* from 11 March to 17 April 1884, without the preface. Arguably, the preface received more attention than the novel itself, if a spate of book reviews allegedly dealing with the novel, but

[17] *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p. 180.

in fact discussing the preface, are any indication.[18] The polemic surrounded the preface, not the novel. In addition, in all four of Goncourt's prefaces the text often treats the future of literature rather than the novel at hand. Familiarity with the novel itself was not essential. Genette labels this kind of preface (a preface that avoids the novel) a 'préface élusive' and describes it as one that '[accède] à un statut textuel relativement autonome'.[19] In other words, it is not obligatory to read the novels in order for the preface to be comprehensible as the preface does little to clarify or illuminate the novel. This is specifically the case in *La Faustin*, where the preface bears no relation to the main text. This said, in the three other prefaces, a knowledge of the other works of the author would facilitate understanding, as in these three prefaces Goncourt's *œuvre* is discussed. Of course, the ideal reader would be both familiar with Goncourt's *œuvre* and read both preface and novel.

A central trait of the prefaces, perhaps the most important characteristic, is the aim to innovate and renew literature, and this may indicate that the prefaces - apart from *La Faustin* which is clearly addressed to 'mes lectrices' - are addressed to professional readers and writers, namely authors. Insofar as this is the case, the prefacer is interested in transmitting a literary doctrine to these other authors. This is important because, as Christophe Charle notes, 'l'afflux le plus important de nouveaux venus [writers to the literary market] se situe pendant la période 1876-1885'.[20] Though Charle does not mention it, these dates correspond almost exactly to the chronology of Edmond de Goncourt's solo *œuvre*: 1877-1884. They thus go some way to explaining the ideological focus of the prefaces, as well as why most prefaces were written after Jules' death: 'Jules,' Hubert Juin comments, 'est mort avant toute polémique'.[21] In this respect it can be argued that the prefaces belie a consciousness

[18] See for example, Quidam, 'Les Goncourts', *Le Figaro*, 25 April, 1884; Gustave Geffroy, 'Revue littéraire: les Goncourt', *La Justice*, 10 November 1884; Georges Duval, 'Le Roman nouveau', *L'Evénement*, 22 April 1884; Francis Enne, 'Au hasard, la préface de *Chérie*', *La Nation*, 27 April 1884.
[19] *Seuils*, p. 159.
[20] *La Crise du roman à l'époque du naturalisme*, p. 48.
[21] *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, p. 2.

of the literary field, which is equally attested to by the fact that in 1875 Edmond de Goncourt added a preface to the Goncourt brothers' 1864 novel *Renée Mauperin*. On the one hand the prefaces serve as a defence of Goncourt's past *œuvre*, and on the other they launch an offensive which aims at consolidating the future position of their author and initiating changes in literature. The prefaces are polemical due to this double focus. They will reach a wider audience because there are more newcomers to the literary scene, because of Goncourt's social position, and, because of the very fact that they are polemical.

Each of the prefaces begins with a general discussion of literature and inches (very) slowly towards a presentation of the novel, without always reaching its destination. For, with the notable exception of *Chérie*, none of the novels' plots is revealed in the prefaces. Thus in *La Fille Élisa*, the preface talks at length about prostitution and the penitential system in general, but never truly announces the plot of the novel. Likewise, *Les Frères Zemganno* is only mentioned at the end of its preface, and then only in terms of three ill-defined - possibly even undefined - categories. Nowhere is it suggested that the novel deals with two circus performers. This prefatorial method enables the novels to be situated within a literary framework that can explain how and why the novels came to be, without examining the actual novels. Regardless of this structure which should lead naturally into an interpretation of the novel or a suggested reading, more often than not, in the Goncourt prefaces, the prefacer in fact provides a model of the ideal novel, only to claim that this model does not correspond to the novel that is about to be read. For example, in the prefaces to *Chérie*, *La Faustin* and *Les Frères Zemganno*, the reader is told what is wrong with books to date and is presented with wish-lists of what could have been done differently to improve them. The first forty lines of the preface to *Les Frères Zemganno* discuss the contemporary situation of the novel and offer advice to aspiring authors. In the remaining ten lines of this preface, however, it is stated that the novel about to be read is, in reality, 'une tentative dans une réalité poétique', a

category which had not been introduced in the rest of the text. Insofar as the preface ignores or negates the very theories which it presents, it is necessary to disagree with Henri Mitterand when he identifies a syllogism which he believes applies to prefaces. In a chapter entitled 'La préface et ses lois: avant-propos romantiques', Mitterand argues convincingly that prefaces as discourses are 'document[s] sur la théorie du genre romanesque' which aim to transmit a given ideology. The transmission takes the following form: 'La littérature doit *être* ou *faire "x"*. Or ce roman a fait *"x"*; Donc toi, lecteur, tu dois le tenir pour un livre de valeur universelle'.[22] In the case of these four particular Goncourt prefaces, the ideological message seems to be: 'literature should be x. This novel is y. But I, the prefacer/author, nevertheless remain the theoretician of x'. Mitterand's core phrase - '*La littérature doit être "x"*'[23] - is more accurate as far as Goncourt's prefaces are concerned. The prefaces offer readings of the literary scene, as well as models for literary evolution, but not readings of the novels.

One obvious consequence of this acknowledged failure to write a novel that adheres to the outlined theory is that the prefacer/author and his *œuvre* are presented as entirely original and individual, in as much as they cannot be categorised or taken as examples of a given literary aesthetic. This protects the work from criticism according to certain aesthetic precepts. Either the author occupies such a position of authority that he can stray from his own theories, or, the author is a writer of inferior quality and spent talents who cannot write the proposed ideal novel. The latter is implied, but only, one suspects, out of false modesty. Not writing may also have to do with being tired, as we have seen, of 'la vérité trop vraie' (*Les Frères Zemganno*, p. 4) of previous novelistic theory and practice. The prefacer acts as a guide who magnanimously discloses where progress can be made, while bequeathing the work to a younger generation. This is a seminal point because it demonstrates how the

[22] Henri Mitterand, *Le Discours du roman* (Paris: PUF, 1980), pp. 21 and 25.
[23] *Le Discours du roman*, p. 24.

prefacer establishes his theory as a model for future creation, but ignores the text at hand. It is a model of transcendence, if not rupture, where an individual author moves beyond the theories of a group so that he does not participate in the institutionalisation of its theories (even if this is implicitly the goal of anyone who assumes the role of mentor). Pierre Orecchioni states that 'chaque équilibre commence à se rompre avant même d'être parfaitement établi' and this is undoubtedly illustrated by the above-mentioned prefatorial tendency.[24]

In *La Fille Élisa* a suggested interpretation forms part of the preface, but this is an exception that can be explained by the fact that it is the only novel that deals with a contentious and taboo subject (actresses, clowns, and young ladies are of little interest compared to prostitutes), the only novel which is alleged to have a social function (to change the penitential system). According to its preface, *La Fille Élisa* has a didactic purpose, thus a ready-made interpretation is offered in its preface; but this interpretation deals with the political themes raised by the novel, rather than the novel proper. By presenting *La Fille Élisa* as an instructive novel, the prefacer attempts to neutralise criticism and diminish the risk of censorship. This exception can be explained by the fact that it is the last of Goncourt's novels to portray the lower classes. As such, it marks the end of an era in Goncourt's career. Interestingly, this very end corresponds to the consecration of the Naturalist movement: *La Fille Élisa* sold 10,000 copies in a few days and was in its thirtieth edition by 1890 (*Journal*, 1, p. lxxxxvi). Considered in relation to Goncourt's solo career, the preface to *La Fille Élisa* represents the first half of his career, which was spent fighting, with his brother, for the right to feature base subjects in a refined style. That, by 1884, Naturalism is the literary movement *par excellence*, might account for the fact that the three later prefaces continue to allude to this past career, while focusing more on

[24] 'Dates-clés et glissements chronologiques' in *Analyse de la périodisation littéraire*, ed. by Charles Bouazis (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1972), pp. 29-38 (p. 35).

how literature can change and on justifying a move away from works such as *Germinie Lacerteux* and *La Fille Élisa*.

These three later prefaces, as we have seen, do not present suggested 'good' readings, though they do attempt to prevent misreadings. Here, the concept of misreading is synonymous with failing to comprehend a literary position. In *La Fille Élisa*, *Les Frères Zemganno* and *Chérie*, for instance, the prefacer pre-empts his critics by anticipating their misreadings and repudiating them. Stylistically, this entails assuming the critic's voice. Mitterand explains this defensive tactic in the following manner: the critic is 'l'adversaire à réduire par avance, contre lequel le préfacier use alternativement de sa propre apologie ou du réquisitoire, cherchant à anticiper les arguments critiques pour en démontrer par avance l'inanité'.[25] This prolepse reinforces the dominant position of the author/prefacer, and consolidates the author/prefacer's dominance of the literary field and his implicit reading of the novel. According to the 'x' 'y' 'x' model outlined above, Goncourt is not presenting a model novel; but, by responding to his critics before they can possibly have formulated their objections, ideal readings and writings are surreptitiously suggested.

Even though *La Fille Élisa* is the only novel which is treatise-like, all of the prefaces dwell on the link between authors - those who write stories - and historians - those who write historical studies. The term 'étude' is used in all four prefaces (*La Fille Élisa*: 2; *Les Frères Zemganno*: 3; *La Faustin*: 1; *Chérie*: 1); 'histoire' (in the historical sense) appears in *La Fille Élisa* (1), *La Faustin* (2), and *Chérie* (1); 'historien' twice in *La Faustin* where it is famously written that 'un romancier… n'est au fond qu'un historien' and once in *La Fille Élisa* where the author is driven to assume the voice of 'un historien'. 'Romancier', 'auteur' and 'écrivain' are used a total of thirteen times, which highlights the fact that the prefaces deal with literature in

[25] *Le Discours du roman*, p. 27.

general rather than with the novels, as the terms signal an attempt at objectivity and are usually employed regarding others.

It should be noted that the discourse on the evolution of literature does not, in these prefaces, take the form of discrediting literary norms. In *Les Règles de l'art*, Pierre Bourdieu writes that: 'l'action subversive de l'avant-garde, qui discrédite les conventions en vigueur, c'est-à-dire les normes de production et d'évaluation de l'orthodoxie esthétique, faisant apparaître comme dépassés, démodés, les produits réalisés selon ces normes, trouve un soutien objectif dans l'*usure de l'effet* des oeuvres consacrées'.[26] The reason that it cannot be argued that the four Goncourt prefaces discredit contemporary aesthetic orthodoxy is that this orthodoxy, according to at least two of the prefaces (*La Fille Élisa* and *Les Frères Zemganno*), is founded on the works of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt. The general terms 'historian' and 'novelist' coexist with the 'je and 'nous' of the prefacer, resulting in a balance between the general and the particular, the objective and the subjective. In the two aforementioned prefaces, it is suggested that *Germinie Lacerteux* - both the novel and its preface - was central to the Naturalist movement in France. That which has lost its effect is the subject matter of the novel, hence the advice to young authors to concentrate on refined subjects while all the while making use of the stylistic lessons taught in the 1865 novel. One part of the consecrated work has been superseded (subject), but the other remains contemporary (style and composition). This invariant theme is linked to the juxtaposition of science and imagination, and the focus on both scientific method and literary style.

When so often the prefaces seem to be dealing with the evolution of fiction, it is surprising that in the first three prefaces the word 'littérature' is employed but once (in *Les Frères Zemganno*). In the 1884 preface, on the other hand, it is employed six

[26] Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p. 352.

times, which is striking even given the relative lengthiness of the text. The preface to *Chérie* has the air of a eulogy, of closing remarks in which the prefacer must convey the maximum about a forty year literary career in a minimum of space. Perhaps this accounts for the use of 'monographie' (1), 'romancier' (2), 'écrivain' (4), 'étude' (1), 'histoire' (1) and 'littérature' (6) in the same text. The use of these terms and the contrast between historian and novelist are manifestations of the conflict between scientific studies and imaginative studies. The prefaces all expound on the need for the author to be well-documented in order to faithfully capture reality in fiction. Nevertheless, in the 1879 preface, it is disclosed that the novel is based on imagination, dream and memory. These categories indicate a more subjective interpretation of documentation than was previously admitted. By 1884, plot and intrigue had been entirely removed from the fictional equation, in the belief that scientific method alone would suffice to accurately portray reality (even if the reality portrayed was more and more interiorised, based as it was on the memories of women).

Where the preface to *Chérie* differs dramatically from the others is not, as we shall see, in including another preface within its boundaries, but in providing, in the opening lines, a succinct summary of the novel. This anomaly supports the argument elaborated above which suggests that *Chérie* is different because the prefacer acknowledges that it is his final novel - 'cette préface étant la préface de mon dernier livre, une sorte de testament littéraire' (p. 6). That the preface to the Goncourt *Journal* is printed in the preface to *Chérie* is unusual in terms of the generally accepted aims of prefaces.[27] In terms of Edmond de Goncourt's *œuvre*, however, it confirms the inter-prefatorial relationships that exist between his publications, and reinforces the continuity that is established between the prefaces. *La Fille Élisa* cites the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux* and comments on it, rather than on *Germinie*-the-

[27] Genette writes in *Seuils* that prefaces are normally written after the primary text (pp. 161-2), but given the nature of the *Journal* as a work-in-progress this cannot be the case.

novel. This justifies Hubert Juin's reading of the prefaces, even though it must not be thought that this is the sole function of the prefaces: '[Elles] perpétuent et accusent les proclamations contenues dans *Germinie Lacerteux*, et [...] modifient en manifeste littéraire, cette préface justement'.[28] Furthermore, the preface to the 1879 novel includes lengthy passages on the topic of *Germinie Lacerteux* and *L'Assommoir*, and thereby places *Les Frères Zemganno* on a literary time-line and establishes its worthiness. In contrast, the novel *La Faustin* is not once mentioned in its preface. Rather, the preface discusses an entirely different work, a work that does not yet exist in 1882 (*Chérie*). It would perhaps be more accurate to consider the preface to *La Faustin* as a supplementary preface to *Chérie*. Likewise, the preface to *Chérie* refers to *La Faustin*'s preface and includes the preface to the *Journal*, a diary which is a work-in-progress that was begun by the two Goncourt brothers and that will be published twenty years after the death of Edmond de Goncourt. By including this preface within the preface to *Chérie*, Goncourt consolidates the play of past-present-future in his prefaces: he writes a preface to a work to which he is co-author (the preface is thus half posthumous [Jules], half anticipatory [Edmond]), and publishes it before the work is completed, so that in the eventuality that the *Journal* itself is not published, 'ce sera toujours ça au moins de sauvé' (p. 7). It is entirely consistent with the other prefaces that the preface to the 1884 novel appears to stray wildly outside the normal bounds of the category 'preface-to-*Chérie*', as one of the striking characteristics of the four prefaces in question is that they elude temporal and prefatorial boundaries. It is entirely consistent that the present, by virtue of the blurring of the boundaries between *Chérie* and the *Journal*, is infused with references to both the past and the future. It is, on the other hand, extremely inconsistent that *Chérie* is summarised. The book's title is mentioned on three separate occasions in its preface, whereas in both *La Faustin* and *Les Fille Élisa* mention of the title is absent from the preface, while in *Les Frères Zemganno* the novel is mentioned but once.

[28] *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, p. 1.

All of these diverse elements - the historian/author and science/imagination binary oppositions, as well as references to age and critical perception - build an interpretation of the evolution of literature and are ways of keeping the prefaces - and, by extension, the author and the novels - current. What Jacques Derrida writes about prefaces in general holds true for Edmond de Goncourt's four prefaces: 'Le *pré* de la préface rend présent l'avenir, le représente, le rapproche, l'aspire et en le devançant le met devant'.[29] The prefaces to *La Fille Élisa*, *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin*, and *Chérie* are significant for the very reason that they manipulate the temporal and repeatedly evoke the prefacer's role in the past, present, and future of the novel. The prefacer's presence is also reinforced, as we have seen, by the use of first person pronouns.

The prefaces to Edmond de Goncourt's four solo novels are more than mere reassertions of claims made in the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux*. They invoke the future, and by invoking the future - in the sense of future readings, as well as future writings - create the polemics of the present. The reverse is also true, however. The prefaces studied in this chapter have all brought the past - the history of literature before the Goncourt brothers, as well as the history of literature post-Edmond de Goncourt - into the present, thereby assuring that the modern reader is acutely aware of the mutations of the literary field. A state of permanent rupture is created, for at each reading, the same thematic, temporal and sociological fissures are brought to life. Because, for a large part, the prefaces seem elusive, in the theoretical sense, and because of the interprefatorial reverberations, the prefaces offer instructions on how to write the future and guidelines on how to read the past, while circumventing the issue of how to read the present.

[29] Jacques Derrida, *Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 13.

Chapter 3A
Document Humain
What is the Document Humain?

Colin Burns has asked two seminal questions regarding Émile Zola's understanding and use of documentation – he interrogates the link between documentation and imagination as well as the principles governing the use of documents - and this chapter will explore these same issues in relation to Edmond de Goncourt.[1] For, in the use of documentation, and the conception of reality, truth, and fiction that it both underpins and supports, lies one of the keys to the evolution of Edmond de Goncourt's literature and methodology in the late 1870s and early 1880s. By studying the role of the author, and how data of various sorts is collected and used, with particular reference to *La Fille Élisa* in this chapter, the relationship between the cultural evolution of literary texts and the personal evolution of one writer will be clarified.

The somewhat ambiguous term 'document humain' refers to at least two distinct concepts. The first pertains to the process of literary creation and the status of the document as material to be exploited in a novel. The second pertains to the result of the process of observation and accumulation of data.[2] The document is many things to the Naturalist author, both means and an end, as David Baguley has rightly observed: 'Le propre du mot "document" dans le lexique naturaliste est l'extraordinaire flexibilité de son application, car il en vient à désigner toutes les étapes de cette méthode, toutes les phases de l'élaboration du roman'.[3] The document is, on the one hand, a material trace of a present or past empirical reality. As Pierre Sabatier formulates it, 'le document c'est un témoignage d'une habitude, d'une mode,

[1] 'Documentation et imagination chez Émile Zola', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 24-25 (1963), 69-78 (p. 69). Burns believes the answer is a fidelity to the author's interior vision of truth rather than to the truth of the document.

[2] For a discussion of the debate surrounding the link between avant-textes and published texts see Marion Schmid, *Processes of Literary Creation* (Oxford: Legenda, 1998), pp. 23-5.

[3] 'Le *Journal* des Goncourt, document naturaliste' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 105-14 (p. 109).

d'un sentiment, d'un drame du passé ou présent; c'est une lettre, un dessin, un moulage, un mouchoir, une étoffe, une robe, un meuble, en un mot, c'est la preuve matérielle d'un fait susceptible de devenir la matière d'un objet d'art'.[4] Written, oral, or painted 'documents', in the form of letters, memoirs, diaries, library research, field work, are acquired, noted, observed or undertaken by the author in order to fuel the creative process and generate what can, given the dual meaning of the term, be considered a new document, the novel. Indeed, texts written according to a documentary process should, according to this interpretation, themselves be interpreted as documents of their time. Future readers should be able to approach document-based novels as pieces of fictionalised truth about the nineteenth century. In practice, of course, this position resulted in several confusions of reality and fiction, where fiction was taken for reality or scientific fact due to the mimetic qualities of texts and the intellectual posturing of authors and narrators. It was not unthinkable, for instance, for science to wish to draw on fictitious sources for its studies. Edmond de Goncourt was interviewed by a doctor for an article in *La Chronique médicale* about his insights into female madness as presented in his novels. Additionally, a medical intern approached him wishing to quote a passage from *La Faustin* as evidence for his study.[5]

The confusion between fact and fiction on the part of scientists is perhaps attributable to the fact that the use of documentation to write novels led novelists to compare their work as authors with other more empirical and analytical forms of writing. One of the most famous analogies is contained in 'La Formule critique appliquée au roman', where Zola compared the author's role with that of the critic, stating that 'le romancier part de la réalité du milieu et de la vérité du document humain; si ensuite

[4] *L'Esthétique des Goncourt* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970), p. 141.
[5] Dr. Cabanès, 'La Documentation médicale dans le roman des Goncourt', *La Chronique médicale*, 15, 1 August 1896, pp. 450-60; 'Journal médical des Goncourt', *Le Journal de médecine de Paris*, 22 March 1891. The intern, Paul Sérieux, wrote: 'Je fais en ce moment un travail sur les anomalies de l'instinct sexuel; je serais heureux de pouvoir vous emprunter l'observation complète de Georges Selwyn si, comme j'en ai la conviction, il s'agit là d'une description faite d'après nature, avec une précision toute scientique' (B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22475, fols 427-8).

il développe dans un certain sens, ce n'est plus de l'imagination à l'exemple des conteurs, c'est de la déduction, comme chez les savants'.[6] He goes on to highlight the similar role of the document in both critical and fictional texts:

> Le romancier et le critique partent aujourd'hui du même point, le milieu exact et le document humain pris sur nature, et ils emploient ensuite la même méthode pour arriver à la connaissance et à l'explication, d'un côté de l'oeuvre écrite d'un homme, de l'autre des actes d'un personnage, l'oeuvre écrite et les actes étant considérés comme étant les produits de la machine humaine soumise à certaines influences.[7]

According to this formulation, documents are akin to material signs of an environment. The novelist, like the critic, studies documents in order to analyse a given environment. The novel is the conclusion of this critical study. The subtitle to the *Rougon-Macquart* series - *Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire* - provides further insight into the system of belief underlying the collection of novels. For Zola the novelist is much like a scientist, and the novel an 'histoire' as 'naturelle' as it is 'sociale'.

The Goncourtian formulation does not differ unduly from Zola's positivist formulation of the novel 'pris sur nature', but Edmond de Goncourt, as has been mentioned, gives the novelist's role a different twist by arguing that ' [un romancier] n'est au fond qu'un historien des gens qui n'ont pas d'histoire' (*La Faustin*, p. 1). This could mean several things, all of which rely on the double meaning of 'histoire' as both history and story: firstly, that the novelist ought to concentrate on those who have historically been ignored by both the novel and by official history (this duty has been discussed in the introduction and preface chapters). This interpretation matches statements made in the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux*. Alternatively, the historian-novelist analogy can be interpreted as an insight into the Goncourtian method of

---

[6] 'La Formule critique appliquée au roman' in *Du Roman: sur Stendhal, Flaubert et les Goncourt*, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Brussels: Complexe, 1989), pp. 51-58 (p. 54).
[7] 'La Formule critique appliquée au roman', pp. 55-6.

creation: fiction produced in the same manner as history. This analogy ties in with the Goncourt brothers' own shared interest in history, particularly the history of the eighteenth century. Indeed, during their early career in the 1850s, most of their writings were of a historical nature (*Histoire de la société française pendant la Révolution* [1854], *Histoire de la société française pendant le Directoire* [1857], *Sophie Arnould d'après sa correspondance et ses mémoires inédites* [1857], *Histoire de Marie-Antoinette* [1858]). The brothers wrote no major novels at this time. In the 1860s, the brothers wrote successful novels and historical studies simultaneously. Pierre Martino believes that thanks to this double career, history and fiction would henceforth be inseparable to the Goncourts:

> Les Goncourt [...] transportèrent de l'histoire au roman; et comme ils continuèrent, après 1860, leurs recherches et leurs publications historiques, en même temps qu'ils écrivaient des romans, ils n'établirent point, entre ces deux modes d'activité, de différences autres que celles qui étaient commandées par la nature des sujets et les conditions de la documentation.[8]

While this may be a slight exaggeration of the situation, and while it is not specified what the particular differences in the 'conditions de la documentation' that Martino refers to are, he does impart the idea that the truth for which the Goncourts search is 'le "vrai" auquel aboutissent les recherches historiques'.[9] The fundamental conundrum of this aphorism is that this method of creation is entirely appropriate as far as historical discourse is concerned, documents can be used to support an argument and in attempts to recreate an historical reality. In a work of fiction, however, the so-called argument is always an invention, the characters and the world they inhabit do not exist, and documents merely contribute to the author's vision rather than to any empirically verifiable past reality. In order to establish *vraisemblance* and plausibility, historical texts, on the other hand, must agree with certain types of documentary processes. This is not the case for the novel. This

---

[8] *Le Roman réaliste sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), p. 231

[9] *Le Roman réaliste sous le Second Empire*, p. 236.

judgement forces a re-evaluation of the notion of history as verifiable in anything other than an extremely specific, or narrow, sense. There is an insoluble tension between literary and historical discourse.

The literature-history parallel is upheld in pre-1870 novels, and to a certain extent *La Fille Élisa*, where the mimetic representation of the Goncourts' immediate environment of Second Empire Paris predominates. Enzo Caramaschi points out as much when he states in general terms that 'le roman sera pour les Goncourt de l'histoire contemporaine: le récit se présentera chez eux comme le moyen de livrer au lecteur, au lieu d'une invention, une réalite transposée, caractéristique d'un moment de l'actualité ou d'un aspect du monde actuel'.[10] This assessment seems accurate as far as pre-1870 novels are concerned. All joint novels save *Madame Gervaisais* (1869) are set primarily in Paris (and *Madame Gervaisais* is the story of a Parisian woman in Rome). All joint novels are clearly set during the nineteenth century (specifically the Second Empire) or based on people who lived during this period. Secondary characters born in the eighteenth century provide a background for the story and furnish the characters with a lineage. Mlle de Varendeuil in *Germinie Lacerteux* was born in 1782 and watched the Restoration and the monarchy of Louis-Philippe fall (chap 2). Germinie herself, who was born circa 1824 and died in the early 1860s, shares her history with Rose, the Goncourts' family servant;[11] Renée Mauperin's father was born in 1787 (p. 12), and Renée herself was born in 1835 (p. 16). The story takes place during Renée's adolescence. Most of the 1860s characters have real-life antecedents that were either known to or of the Goncourts, and Robert Ricatte has pointed out that this distinguished the Goncourts from their contemporaries: 'Flaubert, Zola puisent autour d'eux dans la vie réelle, bien sûr; mais

[10] *Réalisme et impressionisme dans l'oeuvre des frères Goncourt* (Pisa: Libreria Goliardica, 1971), p. 31.
[11] *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt, 1851-1870* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), pp. 253-5.

les Goncourt, eux, opèrent dans un cercle plus étroit, celui de leur famille et de leurs plus intimes relations'.[12]

After 1870, as shall become abundantly clear in subsequent chapters, the novels are more historical in approach than in content and, in addition, they advertise their documentary or historical nature, without its always being clear what the reality they are allegedly describing is. Documents are drawn upon to construct the novels, but they lack the homogeneity of source or subject-matter of previous texts. Whereas Renée Mauperin is based entirely on Blanche Passy, and Germinie Lacerteux on Rose Malingre, the heroine of *La Fille Élisa* is based on some combination of Jules' mistress Maria's two daughters, a woman described in the *Gazette des tribunaux*, and one observed on the Goncourt's 1862 visit to the prison, La Charité, in Clermont d'Oise. The story itself is the result of years' of note-taking that spans the Second Empire and the Third Republic, so much so that in *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* Robert Ricatte divides the textual genesis into four categories according to theme: the brothers' visit to Clermont d'Oise, which provides the background for the second half of the novel, as well as setting up its ending; the information on the midwife provided by Maria, which gives Élisa a past; the world of prostitution; and the crime and trial. He also divides its genesis into several phases: 'Une première phase, assez féconde, irait du début de 1863 à la fin de 1864... Pendant cette période, les Goncourts paraissent s'attacher à des croquis en marge du monde de la prostitution, et surtout à des recherches sur le crime d'Élisa... Mais, à partir de 1868, je les crois de nouveau préoccupés de *La Fille Élisa*, en particulier du cycle de la sage-femme, et, au printemps de 1869, du procès d'Élisa'.[13] Gabrielle Houbre notes that the debate on the French system of incarceration was relaunched in 1871 and that it was only at this point that the judicial side of the novel was 'found' and the plot elaborated.[14] *La*

---

[12] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* (Paris: PUF, 1960), p. 56. See above p. 13, note 29 in 'The Goncourtian World Past and Present' .
[13] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, pp. 29, 56-7, and 21.
[14] 'Le Mauvais procès de *La Fille Élisa*', *Francofonia*, 21 (1991), 87-96 (p. 90).

Fille Élisa is very much an exception in the overall Goncourt *oeuvre*, as, although it is written by Edmond alone, much of the thematic focus of the story was established jointly with Jules. Prior to Jules' death the brothers had found material relating to prostitution and the trial, and had visited the prison which is described in the novel. The theme of social injustice that pervades the novel likely stems from the fact that exactly one month before the initial visit to the prison, the brothers had read Hugo's *Les Misérables*.[15] It is only following Jules' death, however, that the issue of the Auburn system of incarceration re-enters public consciousness and finds its way into the novel. The process of finding (rather than inventing) the story is spread over upwards of two decades and deals, unlike subsequent novels, with topical issues of contemporary relevance. *La Fille Élisa* is, thus, in many ways unlike Edmond de Goncourt's three subsequent novels, though it introduces concepts that arise in them in a different thematic context.

La Faustin and *Chérie,* unlike *La Fille Élisa*, scarcely seem to fulfil Caramaschi's dictum that the Goncourtian novel applies to the 'monde actuel'. Indeed, the latter two (if not three) novels, in addition to being distinctly otherworldly at times, are not uniformly based on Second Empire characters or events. Ironically, this non-homogeneous nature, as will be seen in detail in the following chapters, stems from the documentation itself, which is chosen according to more imaginary, rather than mimetic, ends. Thus, Enzo Caramaschi may be accurate in arguing that 'dans leur oeuvre de romanciers [les Goncourt] traitent l'imaginaire en historiens dans la mesure où ils exigent d'abord, des faits qu'ils chargent de symboliser la réalite de leur temps, d'être arrivés quelque part à quelqu'un, d'être "authentiques"'.[16] The 'authenticity' and 'truth' of later novels is disrupted by the conflicting times, places, people and sources that are drawn upon and surreptitiously represented in the novels, thus putting an end to any claim of Naturalist documentary accuracy and historical

[15] *La Genèse de'La Fille Élisa'*, p. 55.
[16] *Réalisme et impressionnisme dans l'oeuvre des frères Goncourt*, p. 32.

vraisemblance. This change in process in linked to the changing thematic focus of the later novels. François Fosca, without studying the documentary side of the fictions, believes that 'Edmond revenait de plus en plus à ce travail d'assemblage de documents qui convenait si bien à son tempérament; et de *La Fille Élisa* à *Chérie*, on voit peu à peu l'historien éliminer le romancier'.[17] This is true as far as the creative process is concerned: the later novels are more historical in approach than in subject matter; the subjects they deal with renounce Naturalism and move into the realm of the unknown and the unverifiable.

La Fille Élisa is the only one of Edmond's solo novels to be placed in an unambiguous historical moment. Nonetheless, at least one of Edmond de Goncourt's novels, *Chérie*, is based on a conspicuously historical creative process, that has already been introduced in the earlier novel. This process is referred to in the text by a narrator who alleges to have documents to support his fiction (which is presented as a fictionalisation of the truth). Statements such as 'Mme Michelet dit quelque part...' (p. 41) attest to this. (Documents are highlighted in other manners, as well, as in the process of exemplification that is studied in chapter 4 B). This allusion, in the novel, to the documentary process of creation, coupled with the discussion of the genesis of the novel in the preface to *La Faustin*, begs an interrogation of the nature of documents, especially given that an enormous distance separates the themes of the 1877 novel and the 1884 novel. Interestingly, it is at the very moment that Goncourt is composing *Chérie* with its pseudo-documentary focus that he bequeaths his papers to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France: 'Cette correspondance des littérateurs et des artistes du jour où mon frère et moi avions commencé à faire de la littérature jusqu'au jour de ma mort, je la lègue au département des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque pour être mise immédiatement à la disposition du public. Le 19 décembre 1882'.[18] The relationship between documentation and the composition of the novel is thus all the

[17] *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941), p. 340.
[18] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22479, fol. 404.

more tightly intertwined. It is at this point of transition, when Goncourt is composing a documentary novel so unlike his earliest solo work, that the correspondence is bequeathed to posterity, with, as Genette would have it, 'la part d'intention qui s'attache à un tel geste'.[19]

According to Baguley, the Goncourt brothers' *Journal* constitutes 'un vaste dossier préparatoire de leurs romans'. 'Le *Journal* des Goncourt', he writes, 'est comme une immense machine à transformer instantanément le vécu en documentaire'.[20] Given the nature of the *Journal* as a repository for notes of all kinds, everything is susceptible of becoming a 'document' and of, therefore, being fictionalised. The process of creating a literary text need not start with a plan. Because of the *Journal*, the documentary process is ongoing. The topic of a novel is not necessarily decided before research is undertaken. Information gathered without reference to a particular novel may be used towards a possible future novel. In this sense, the Goncourt *Journal* acts as an 'aide-mémoire' or a 'forme d'épargne'.[21]

The *Journal* is a resource that furnishes eye-witness accounts and more reflective writings. It is, to borrow Béatrice Didier's terms, both 'intime' and 'externe', considerations of self go hand in hand with reporting on the external world.[22] It provides both objective and subjective documents, by recording both well-anchored specific social facts that can be transposed into novels, and documents of a more psychological nature, which establish lyrical rather than actual historical parallels between an empirical reality and a fictional one. The genetic study of *La Fille Élisa*, for example, confirms how both objective and subjective documents from the *Journal* are drawn upon during the creative process. Descriptions of the prison (in the novel called 'Noirlieu') and the brothels that Élisa visits, for instance, refer to an

[19] *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p. 364.
[20] 'Le *Journal* des Goncourt, document naturaliste', pp. 111 and 107.
[21] Gérard Genette, 'Le Journal, l'anti-journal', *Poétique*, 47 (1981), 315-22 (p. 319); Béatrice Didier, *Journal intime* (Paris: PUF, 1976), p. 52.
[22] *Journal intime*, p. 30.

observed reality: following visits to these places, details and observations were noted in the *Journal* by the Goncourt brothers, only to be later used in the novel. The final chapter of the novel, for example, draws on the Goncourt brothers' visit to Clermont and is, basically, a rewriting of their visit: 'Il y a des années, je passais quelques semaines dans un château des environs de Noirlieu. Un jour de désoeuvrement, la société avait la curiosité d'aller visiter la Maison de détention des femmes' (p. 196). The actual account of the Goncourts' visit is told on 28 October 1862 in the *Journal* (1, pp. 868-74) and a note in the carnet (folio 6) makes it clear that this conflation of visits was planned: 'Fin à l'hôpital de la prison de Clermont'.[23] On the other hand, states of mind and moods attributed to Jules de Goncourt in the *Journal* are transposed into the 1877 novel and applied to the main character, particularly in the final chapters in which Jules' deterioration becomes Élisa's.[24] A similar process is found in *Les Frères Zemganno*, where the text can, as will be shown in chapter 3 B, be considered a 'document', or fictionalised account, of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt's artistic quest, due to the manipulation of psychological documents or what Genette calls 'témoignages'.[25] In this case, however, the thematic focus of the novel is vastly different and the documents are used in a novel that has distinctly Decadent overtones.

Once noted in the *Journal*, episodes drawn from reality become the material of future literary productions. Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau brings this interpretation to its conclusion by proposing that the *Journal* is not merely the source of the Goncourts' fiction, but is itself the fiction. This is accomplished by an aesthetic that, as time goes by, approaches collage:

> On est tenté de lire le *Journal* des Goncourt comme une grande somme de documents humains, qu'il est bien sûr, comme l'avant-texte des romans. En

[23] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, pp. 183-4. The passage continues: 'Visite de gens qui, voyant sur la figure de la mourante un désir de parler qu'elle comprime quand elle voit le directeur'.
[24] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, p. 132.
[25] *Seuils*, pp. 363-4.

> réalité, la pratique des Goncourt (et surtout d'Edmond) est peut-être inverse: de *Germinie Lacerteux* à *Chérie*, déjà *Charles Demailly* (la genèse de *En 18...* est, pour cause, plus obscure), le roman goncourtien semble une coupe de plus en plus brute du *Journal*, une mise en forme de plus en plus légère et souple de sa matière.[26]

Thorel-Cailleteau's analysis highlights the extent to which in post-1870 novels documents were used to different ends than they were in pre-1870 texts. In Goncourt's novels of the 1880s the use of documentation goes some way to undermining the Naturalist ends according to which they are collected and assembled.

This cut and paste aesthetic could be interpreted as a sign of fading literary prowess, of Edmond de Goncourt's lack of compositional talent compared to his brother. It could be argued that Edmond's use of the *Journal* is the supreme incarnation of the 'document humain', and of Naturalist fiction reflecting reality. It could be argued that there is no more Naturalist method of creation than the daily transformation of reality into a document so that it might be used in fiction. It cannot be reasonably argued, however, that Edmond de Goncourt's novels are the most Naturalist of the Goncourts' collective *oeuvre* due to the fact that the details from the *Journal* included in them are not subjected to rewriting. This interpretation would discount the extent to which extracts are selected according to increasingly Decadent thematic concerns and are less rooted in a unified historical reality. It also side-steps the question of mimetic representation. An example of the former situation is the manner in which details relating to one specific event are drawn from the *Journal* and employed in more than one novel. Robert Ricatte, for example, has proven that research for *La Fille Élisa* and *Germinie Lacerteux* was carried out at the same time in the early 1860s, and that certain documentary details from this period appear in both novels, thus shattering the illusion of historical or temporal unity of story.[27] One reality is transformed into

---

[26] *La Tentation du livre sur rien: naturalisme et décadence* (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions interuniversitaires, 1994), p. 182.
[27] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, pp. 10-11.

two distinct fictions. In addition, Gabrielle Houbre notes how passages in the *Journal* that relate to orgies and homosexuality in the female religious orders which run prisons were omitted from the novel though observed in reality. This indicates either that this particular reality was deemed too scandalous for a fiction, or that the author was aware of the political and legal dangers of including such allegations in the novel.[28] Houbre also studies the manner in which Goncourt deforms the historical and political reality of the French prison system and presents highly biased readings of the source texts pertaining to prostitution that were consulted (notably Parent Duchâtelet's *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris*, 1837 - also used by Alexandre Dumas for *Filles, lorettes et courtisanes*, 1843 - and Joséphine Mallet's, *Les Femmes en prison*, 1843). Goncourt merges two distinct systems of incarceration under one name in order to accentuate the evils of silence. Despite the fact that Houbre is perhaps misguided in assuming that Goncourt's choices were a mistake, her comments are worthy of note: 'Entraîné par sa volonté de convaincre l'opinion, Goncourt commet une faute grave dans sa préface: par maladresse ou par mauvaise foi, il déforme et détourne le sens original des ouvrages cités comme caution à ses propos. La scientificité affichée par la préface est donc fallacieuse'.[29] This much is known about the choices that went into *La Fille Élisa*; a similar form of selection is manifest in the three later novels, but these are also influenced by changing a thematic focus that no longer prioritises Naturalist concerns such as the portrayal of the hereditary and environmentally imposed decline of the Parisian underclasses.

One of the key areas of change in the documentary process post-1870 is evident in terms of book reasearch. *La Fille Élisa*, it should be reiterated, is the only novel of Edmond de Goncourt's for which a full manuscript and preparatory notes exist. Robert Ricatte argues that much of the story was elaborated jointly by Edmond and Jules: 'il est assez curieux que, sauf les notes de lecture qui figurent dans le carnet de

[28] Houbre cites entries in the *Journal* on the following dates: 30 Dec. 1876, 21-3 & 28 March 1877, 3 Oct. 1876. 'Le mauvais procès de *La Fille Élisa*', p. 91.
[29] 'Le Mauvais procès de *La Fille Élisa*', p. 91.

La Fille Élisa, nous n'ayons dans ce carnet aucune indication sur le travail d'Edmond seul'.[30] However, Ricatte also remarks that in the case of *La Fille Élisa*, the reading notes are from Edmond alone, whereas for previous novels this task was undertaken by both brothers:

> Il est un fait: toutes les notes de lecture du carnet d'*Élisa* sont prises par Edmond; or, dans les autres carnets destinés à la documentation de leurs romans, *Manette Salomon*, *Madame Gervaisais*, on voit les deux frères se partager ce dépouillement ingrat des ouvrages techniques. Si Edmond s'en est ici chargé tout seul, on peut penser que seule la mort de son frère l'a privé du secours qu'il en pouvait attendre'.[31]

In effect, *La Fille Élisa* is a novel of two parts in more than just structure. Ricatte's genetic analysis, as mentioned above (p. 84), demonstrates how it was written and elaborated over several distinct phases. The details pertaining to the story of the prostitute all stem from pre-1870 sources (discussion with Jules' mistress Maria about her daughter, readings on the history of prostitution). The story of the prison, on the other hand, relates to a visit by the brothers to a women's detention centre, Clermont-d'Oise, in 1862, to Edmond's readings, and to the re-emergence of the debate on incarceration. It seems, then, that much of the pre-writing work was carried out by both brothers. This assessment would coincide with what is known about the Goncourts' collaborative writing, which Émile Zola describes in the following fashion:

> Ils amassaient surtout un nombre considérable de notes, voyant tout sur nature, se pénétrant du milieu où les épisodes devaient se dérouler. Puis, ils causaient le plan, arrêtaient ensemble les grandes scènes, jalonnaient ainsi l'oeuvre entière. Enfin, arrivés à la rédaction, à cette exécution qui ne comporte plus le débat oral, ils s'asseyaient tous deux à la même table, après avoir une dernière fois préparé le morceau qu'ils comptaient écrire dans la journée; et là, ils rédigeaient ce morceau chacun de son côté, ils en faisaient deux versions, selon leur façon personnelle de voir. Ces deux versions, qu'ils se lisaient, étaient ensuite fondues en une seule; on conservait de part et

[30] Robert Ricatte, 'Autour de *La Fille Élisa*', *La Revue d'histoire littéraire de France*, 48-1 (1948), 69-83 (pp. 82-3).
[31] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, p. 7.

> d'autre les choses heureuses, les trouvailles; c'étaient les apports de deux esprits libres, comme le meilleur d'eux-mêmes qu'ils écremaient et dont ils faisaient un tout solide.[32]

In *Seuils*, Gérard Genette introduces the term 'épitexte privé', which he defines as documents that contribute to an understanding of a work of fiction but that are shared between the author and a third party rather than the public.[33] These texts, which include diaries, but also letters, can contribute directly to the critic's understanding of the elaboration of a work of fiction. In the case of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, the studies of paratextual documents such as letters point to a clear change in creative process following the death of Jules de Goncourt. The Goncourt correspondence (letters sent to and, to a lesser extent, from the brothers) suggests that more use was made of third party sources and research after the death of Jules than before. There appear, for instance, to be only two pre-1870 letters that deal with the details of a novel before its publication. Both are from the same correspondent (Georges Ponchet) and both provide information about a monkey at the Jardin des Plantes for the novel *Manette Salomon* (1867).[34] The number of letters received by Edmond de Goncourt in connection with the process of literary creation increases dramatically for the three later novels (there are letters to and from Alphonse Daudet that deal with the *La Fille Élisa*, but these are more letters of encouragement than of documentation - see, in particular, letters 22, 33, 36, 41 and 43 of the *Corres. Gonc-Daud*). In the correspondence received by Goncourt there are two letters pertaining to *La Fille Élisa*, nine pertaining to *Les Frères Zemganno*, nine dealing with the creation of *La Faustin*, and ten relating to *Chérie*.[35] These numbers alone testify to

---

[32] 'Edmond et Jules de Goncourt' in *Du Roman: sur Stendhal, Flaubert et les Goncourt*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, pp. 247-284 (pp. 267-8).
[33] *Seuils*, p. 341.
[34] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22473, fols 162-63. (Excluding a letter awarding Goncourt the 'Médaille de Vermeil de la Société protectrice des animaux pour Manette Salomon'. B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22463, fols 26-9.)
[35] All references are to B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F. *La Fille Élisa*: 22460, fol. 2; 22461, fol. 1. *Les Frères Zemganno*: 22454, fol. 208; 22462, fols 514-5; 22464, fols 251-2; 22464, fols 320-1; 22464, fols 322-3; 22469, fol. 308; 22471, fols 546-7; 22475, fol. 233; 22477, fol. 79. *La Faustin*: 22457, fols 132-6; 22462, fols 75-6; 22462, fol. 77; 22465, fol. 248; 22473, fol. 53; 22473, fol. 55; 22473, fol. 176; 22473, fols 178-9; 22478, fol. 155. *Chérie*: 22459, fol. 35; 22459, fol. 40; 22461, fols 138-9; 22462,

the changing circumstances of literary creation as far as post-1870 novels are concerned. Again, once this brotherly collaboration was ended, letters relating to works in progress increase in number, suggesting that Edmond requested the assistance of others as a means of replacing the absent brother and absent writing partner. This change in the process of writing corresponds with a changing thematic focus and a transformation in the ends to which documents are used.

As has been shown, many of the issues at stake in *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin* and *Chérie* are already present in *La Fille Élisa*. Indeed, some of the fundamental documentary practices of later novels are perceptible in *La Fille Élisa*, which incorporates letters into the body of the text (though changing their function and significance), draws on past sources including, it has been suggested, the Goncourts' *L'Histoire de la société française* (both of the Revolution and the Directory).[36] Yet, rather than seek to add to Robert Ricatte's already very complete study of *La Fille Élisa*, the following pages will continue the discussion of the (evolving) role of documentation in Edmond de Goncourt's three later novels. They will assess how documents - both fiction and non-fiction - that were preserved by the author inform, and were integrated into, his novels and will argue that while the creative process, Naturalist in essence, is based on use of documents, there is a transformation in the thematic issues that the texts address and an evolution toward Decadence that is reflected in documentary choices.

---

fol. 52; 22465, fols 252-3; 22471, fol. 292; 22471, fols 293-4; 22474, fol. 356; 22477, fols 252-3; 22478, fols 47-8.

[36] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, pp. 182 and 191.

Chapter 3B
Document Humain
Les Frères Zemganno: Author as Acrobat

Les Frères Zemganno is a very different novel from *La Fille Élisa* in terms of subject matter, themes and the use of documentation. It is based on documentary research and provides a realist picture of the nineteenth-century circus, yet at the same time the portrayal of circus performers introduces themes distant from Realism and Naturalist experimental heredity. In addition, as *Les Frères Zemganno* has been somewhat problematically interpreted as a fictional autobiography, the role of the 'document humain' in it is doubly complicated. The designation fictional autobiography implicates both reality and a given set of biographical details, and suggests that biographical information is disguised within a fictional framework.[1] The figures who are said to represent Edmond and Jules de Goncourt - Gianni and Nello Bescapé/Zemganno - are gymnast-acrobats, and the choice of profession to illuminate the lives of the two authors must be questioned in regard to criteria of realism and *vraisemblance*. Indeed, given the circus' nature as the domain of illusion and disguise, the choice of the novel's location seems to carry with it an implicit rejection of mimetism. *Les Frères Zemganno* does not represent so much the Goncourt brothers as their artistic struggle for innovation: similarities, while present in specific incidents, are much more apparent on the level of artistic creation. Though at first the transposition from novelist to circus performer can be interpreted as alluding to the Goncourts' preoccupation with the working and lower classes (extended here to include low culture as opposed to high culture), it in fact highlights the extent to which Edmond de Goncourt is concerned with art that is ripe with Realist detail but within stories that are themselves far from the Realist prerogatives of mid-nineteenth-century literature.

---

[1] For more on the relationship between the novel and autobiography see Georges May, *L'Autobiographie* (Paris: PUF, 1984), chapter 8, 'Autobiographie et roman'.

There are correspondences between the fears and memories of the clowns and the Goncourts'. This parallelism where documents have changed context has led critics to assess the novel as a fictionalisation of the Goncourts' life. Because of the change in working environment and art-form in the novel, however, biographical details have been detached from a unified 'life' - that of the Goncourts, which is in fact a dual life - in order to create a new fictional existence based on art and artifice. The life that is related in the novel is not that of two authors; rather, the 'writing' life has its equivalents in circus life, and a parallel world is created in the fictional autobiography. The personalities of the Goncourts are transposed into another environment, and this avoids the problems posed by the so-called 'pacte autobiographique', as formulated by Philippe Lejeune.[2] The autobiographical pact posits author, narrator and character as sharing one voice, one 'je'. The transposition from literature to circus eliminates the need for any autobiographical pact by asserting the text's fictional qualities. Mid twentieth-century critic Charles Beuchat side-steps the issue by asserting that the *Les Frères Zemganno* is a 'sorte d'autobiographie transposée'.[3] Beuchat is not the only critic to interpret the novel in this way. Julia Daudet, who never met the younger Goncourt, described *Les Frères Zemganno*, which is dedicated to her, as a novel about Edmond de Goncourt's love for his sibling: 'c'est un monument d'amour fraternel et l'histoire de la collaboration des Goncourt brisée par la mort du plus jeune'.[4]

Evidently, critics at the time of publication recognised the Goncourts in the Zemgannos. Gilbert Gavi, an Italian correspondent of Goncourt's, believes that it is, in fact, Gianni who tells the story of his brother. In confusing the name of the author of *Les Frères Zemganno* with the name of one of its characters, Gavi usefully draws attention to the similarities between the fiction and reality: 'C'est bien Gianni lui-

[2] *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).
[3] Charles Beuchat, *Histoire du naturalisme français*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Corrêa, 1949), 1: *Le Naturalisme en marche*, p. 335.
[4] Mme Alphonse Daudet, *Souvenirs autour d'un groupe littéraire* (Paris: Charpentier, 1910), pp. 111-12.

même qui raconte la vie et la fin prématurée de son cher Nello'.[5] It should be remembered that whereas Jules de Goncourt died at the age of 40 from syphilis, in the novel, Nello does not die, instead he is paralysed. The author presents an inability to act (caused, ostensibly, by a physical impediment) rather than describing the successful renewal of art. The cause behind the end of the Goncourts' joint artistic creation is death; Nello's paralysis is as good as death as it ends his creative life. More recently, Michel Caffier has noted the similarity between Edmond and Jules and Gianni and Nello in terms of artistic initiation: Gianni introduces Nello to the world of gymnastics just as Edmond initiates Jules in the world of writing.[6] Another critic, Pierre-Jean Dufief, is more assertive in making the link between fact and fiction, and uses the term autobiography to describe the book: '*Les Frères Zemganno* sont un roman autobiographique, un récit constellé de petits faits vrais, fruits non plus de l'observation mais du souvenir'.[7] Indeed, the distinction between observation and memory is all important and is at the heart of the debate on documentary truth and realism in the 1879 novel, as well as the debate on the nature of truth and memory in fictional autobiography, Naturalism and Decadence. For, while many details may be drawn from the Goncourts' life, and while the story may be inspired by their life, the change in social context between the author and his characters is enormous.

All of the above denominations centre on the part of reality and fiction in texts. In his study *L'Autobiographie*, Georges May attempts a schematisation of autobiographical writings based on the distinction between fact and fiction. *Les Frères Zemganno* belongs to the literary end of May's spectrum due to the fact that nowhere is it stated openly in the novel that it is an autobiography. It is presented as fiction, or at the very least a fictionalisation of the Goncourts' life together. However, the novel could

[5] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22464 fol. 253 (25 June 1879).
[6] *Les Frères Goncourt: un déshabillé de l'âme* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1994), p. 210.
[7] Edmond de Goncourt, *Les Frères Zemganno*, ed. by Pierre-Jean Dufief (Geneva: Slatkine, 1996), p. 14.

conceivably belong to a number of May's categories, depending on the literary awareness of the reader (for instance, whether or not the reader knew that Edmond de Goncourt wrote jointly with his brother). The novel could be a 'personal' or 'biographical' novel in which one character is developed, but where that character is 'trop éloigné de celui de l'auteur pour qu'on puisse y voir une véritable transposition de celui-ci'.[8] Alternatively, *Les Frères Zemganno* can be viewed as an autobiographical novel written in the third person if it is considered that the central characters are transparent transpositions of the Goncourts. These considerations are of central importance to the study of the text with respect to the documentary process, and the distinctions drawn by May with regard to the types of autobiographical writing are closely associated in the case of the Goncourts with Genette's distinction between document and 'témoignage', where the former is verifiable and the latter is not.[9]

Nello is the younger brother, born twelve years after his brother ('venu au monde douze ans après son frère' [p. 52]); Jules is eight years younger than Edmond. Gianni and Nello Bescapé's hands are joined by their mother upon her death: 'sans une parole, sans une caresse, sans un baiser, elle [la mère] prenait la petite main de Nello qu'elle mettait dans la main de son aîné, et ses doigts déjà froids serraient les mains des deux frères dans une étreinte que la mort ne desserra pas' (p. 69). A similar occurrence is recounted in the Goncourt *Journal*, and involves the two diarists and their mother: 'Ma mère, sur votre lit de mort, vous m'avez mis la main de votre enfant chéri et préféré dans la mienne, en me recommandant cet enfant avec un regard qu'on n'oublie pas' (*Journal*, 18-19 June 1870, 10 heures du matin, 2, p. 256). The two travelling gymnasts, like the two well-to-do Goncourt brothers, are united by their mother. This bond grows into a quest for artistic refinement and innovation which is, ultimately, destructive. In the novel, the younger brother suffers an injury which

[8] *L'Autobiographie*, p. 189.
[9] *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), pp. 363-4.

prevents him from performing again. The older brother agonises and blames his own desire for novelty for the downfall of his brother, whose dedication to art is presented as a manifestation of filial love:

> Et longtemps, songeant à l'épanouie jeunesse de son frère, à l'indolence et à la paresse de sa nature, à la pente de son caractère à se laisser doucement vivre, sans effort et sans recherche de gloriole, il se remémorait tout ce que lui avec son exemple, son vouloir de célébrité, son dur célibat, avait contrarié, gêné, empêché dans cette vie toute sacrifiée à la sienne, et cela jusqu'au moment, où au milieu de sa songerie, s'échappait de la bouche de Gianni avec l'accent d'un remords: "[...] Je suis foutûment coupable!" (pp. 231-2).

The echoes of Edmond de Goncourt's own guilt at working his brother to death in the name of literature are audible: 'A cette heure, je maudis la littérature. Peut-être, sans moi, se serait-il fait peintre. Doué comme il l'était, il aurait fait son nom sans s'arracher la cervelle... et il vivrait' (*Journal*, 18-19 June 1870, 10 heures du matin, 2, p. 255). The details in the novel have indisputable antecedents in the Goncourt *Journal* and little seems to have changed in the transposition of these documents of a psychological nature ('témoignages') from the *Journal* to the novel. Yet, the social differences between the Goncourts and the Zemgannos cannot be escaped. In addition, in the novel, the brothers' love for each other is one reason that explains their celibacy.

Les Frères Zemganno is not only a representation or interpretation of the Goncourts' lives, however. It has also been read as an accurate portrayal of the nineteenth-century circus, particularly the circus of the Second Empire, so much so that one English fan wrote to Goncourt, with no doubt dubious motives, requesting not only a photograph of the Zemganno brothers, but a special circus performance of 'young men of about 21'.[10] More pertinently, the accuracy of many of the circus details is attested to by the many letters, both of praise and of information, that Goncourt received regarding specific circus issues. He collected French, Russian, British and

[10] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22464, fols 270-1.

Italian documents about the circus and drew on them to give citational authority to the novel. For example, a letter from engraver Félix Braquemond, who, according to Dufief 'vécut jeune dans un manège', reveals that Ernest Renan, author of *La Vie de Jésus*, was a source of information on the circus (and, therefore, a man of many interests):

> Il [Renan] est tout à votre disposition - mais je crois que voici quelque chose de plus intéressant. Renan a connu et il pourrait probablement le retrouver un graveur sur bois qui a été lui-même saltimbanque et fils de saltimbanque et il raconte tres [sic] bien ses histoires. Ce garcon [sic] pourrait peut-être vous dire ce que vous désirez.[11]

Braquemond's note shows an author on a search for specific documentary evidence upon which to build a fiction which represents his own life. Other letters serve a similar function. Charles Franconi, director of the 'Société des deux cirques de Paris (Cirque d'hiver/Cirque d'été)' educates Goncourt on trampolines and assures the author that he will be in contact with details on rehearsals.[12] The lancewood trampoline mentioned in Franconi's letter - 'Pour le renseignement que vous me demandez concernant le tremplin, l'orthographe du mot est bien lance-wood, ou bois des îles' -[13] is found in the novel where the terms of Franconi's letter are reiterated: 'un tremplin où il substituait au sapin "le frêne des îles", le bois désigné par les Américains sous le nom caractéristique de *lance-wood*' (p. 197). The presence of the exotic trampoline is enough to relate the brothers' intrepidness, but adds little to the overall narrative. It also recalls Théodore Banville's 1857 poem 'Saut de tremplin'. The Zemganno brothers are themselves engaged by the 'directeur-gérant des Deux-Cirques' (p. 121). In a note to his preface to the novel, Edmond de Goncourt acknowledges the assistance of several contemporary circus professionals in providing a 'reality' in which to ground his fiction:

---

[11] *Les Frères Zemganno*, ed. by Pierre-Jean Dufief (Geneva: Slatkine, 1996), p. 20; B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22454 fol. 208. Letter dated 'Paris Auteuil 11 9bre 1878'.
[12] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22462, fols 514-5. This letter is dated 24 March 1879.
[13] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22462, fols 514-5.

> À propos de la réalité que j'ai mise autour de ma fabulation, je tiens à remercier hautement M. Victor Franconi, M. Léon Sari, et les frères Hanlon-Lees qui ne sont pas seulement les souples gymnastes que tout Paris applaudit, mais qui raisonnent encore de leur art comme des savants et des artistes.[14]

This statement of thanks (for which the Hanlon-Lees brothers in turn thank Goncourt)[15] draws attention to the realist aspects of the text. Indeed, it anchors the novel firmly in the 'real'. The reference establishes the *vraisemblance* and authority of the novel by giving it a stamp of approval from experts in the circus. The part of reality in the 'fabulation' is made explicit before the reader has begun the story, even though, in truth, the thematic thrust of the text verges on the Decadent.

It is not only contemporary circus that is mentioned in the novel, past circus traditions are also alluded to.[16] Information on the circus of yore is gleaned from Archangelo Tuccaro's *Trois dialogues de l'exercice de sauter*, this much is revealed in the novel itself:

> Gianni, un liseur de livres dans les boîtes des quais, et que l'on voyait, à l'étonnement de ses camarades, souvent arriver au Cirque, un bouquin sous le bras, descendait parfois dans le pavillon de musique un vieux volume: un gros in-quarto, relié en parchemin, aux coins écornés, aux armoiries lacérées pendant la Révolution, et où la main et le crayon d'un enfant de nos jours avaient mis des pipes à la bouche des personnages du seizième siècle. De ce livre portant sur son dos: TROIS DIALOGUES DE L'EXERCICE DE SAUTER ET DE VOLTIGER PAR ARCANGELO TUCCARO 1599, et apprenant que le Roi Charles IX, *s'adonnoit à toute espèce de sauts et s'y montroit fort adextre et dispos*, Gianni lisait à son frère (p. 160).

---

[14] *Les Frères Zemganno*, ed. by Pierre-Jean Dufief, p. 36.
[15] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22465, fol. 93.
[16] Frédéric Masson supplies information pertaining the the circus of old, describing as he does different types of jumps and tightrope acts. His information is drawn from an encyclopedia of 'Art. Sauts'. He also explains the eighteenth-century meaning of clown: 'Au XVIIIe siècle le mot clown existe mais a le sens suivant: Paysan - rustre - rustaud, homme sans manière'. B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22469, fol. 308.

Citing actual texts in the novel is far from unusual, but while the documentary detail contributes to establishing a level of *vraisemblance* by describing the book as a material object with a referent, it also makes surreptitious reference to the creative process (it is also related, as will be seen in chapter 4 D, to lexical issues). This is consolidated by the fact that Tuccaro's text was owned by Goncourt himself, thereby linking the fictional and historical brothers by means of a shared object.[17] Both Edmond and Gianni own Tuccaro's study, and both Edmond and Gianni use it in their artistic creations.

Gianni and Nello are born into a family of *saltimbanques*, but Gianni is an 'acrobate par vocation' (p. 23). The brothers become clowns in a modern sense of the word, only to later become 'gymnaste[s]-acteur[s]' (p. 103). Over the span of their career, the wider transformation of the nineteenth-century circus is visible: from *saltimbanque* to clown, the brothers become a hybrid, a new species of 'gymnastes-acteurs' and their art becomes more elaborate, their costumes more extravagant. The modifications of the circus arts are apparent in the realist detail itself. As Gianni and Nello innovate, so the name for their profession adapts. The novel, meanwhile, while ostensibly depicting the circus, also offers, as will be seen below, a reading of the evolution of both circus and literature in the nineteenth century.

The 1879 novel paints ancient and modern French circus arts, and is realistic in its detail if not in tone. Charles Beuchat's comment regarding *Renée Mauperin* (1864) can shed light on the role of documentary truth in *Les Frères Zemganno*: '[les auteurs] mettent plus de vérité dans le détail que dans l'ensemble'.[18] This is obvious in terms of the circus by the indications that Goncourt sought specific information relating to relatively small points of interest (vocabulary, etc.). It is obvious in

[17] Tuccaro's book is listed in the catalogue of the sale of Edmond de Goncourt's books after his death: number 1087. Alidor Delzant, *Bibliothèque des Goncourt, livres modernes. Vente à Paris, Hôtel Drouot 5-10 avril 1897* (Paris: Imprimerie de Motteroz, n.d.), p. 174.
[18] *Histoire du naturalisme français, 1e naturalisme en marche*, p. 343.

autobiographical terms in as much as the novel deviates substantially from the events of the Goncourts' life. When they are young, the Goncourt brothers travel France and Algeria before devoting their lives to writing. The Zemgannos also travel, but not to any of the countries that the Goncourts visit, and not for the same reasons as the Goncourts. After spending their childhood roaming Europe with their family's travelling circus, the Zemgannos (still the Bescapés at this point) embark on a journey of discovery to Britain, where they hope to unravel the secrets of the British circus. Though Goncourt himself had never been to Britain, his gymnasts are sent there with the aim of studying this foreign circus 'd'après nature'. Mimicking Naturalist authors and impressionist painters, Gianni exclaims that it would be 'un joli *travail* à aller étudier sur place et dans l'endroit' (p. 101). Goncourt, however, deviates from Naturalist practice by moving the intrigue to an environment which has not been observed and studied first-hand (though some British performers were in Paris at the time), while all the while making reference to this means of creation by making the characters study 'd'après nature' for the same reasons that are shunned by him in later novels (even though earlier works, as well as the *Journal*, are 'd'après nature'). This detail in and of itself subverts the model of Realist and Naturalist creation 'd'après nature' by drawing attention to the novel's deviation from the very processes to which it professes to adhere.

In terms of foreign circuses, Goncourt documents his novel from texts recommended to him by peers. The aforementioned Frédéric Masson directs Goncourt to a study by Dickens: 'Boz [Dickens] a écrit une vie de Joa Grimaldi précédée d'une appréciation de son talent. Joa Grimaldi était le clown principal de Covent Garden'.[19] Another correspondent directs Goncourt to studies written in English about the circus.[20] One of these texts, *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* by Thomas Frost, is pillaged by

[19] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22469 fol. 308.
[20] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22464 fols 320-1 (*The Life of Joa Grimaldi* by Charles Dickens). B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22464 fols 322-3 (*Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* by Thomas Frost; *Modern Boxing* by Pendragen; *Manly Exercises* by Stonehenge; *Boxiana*; *Walkers Manly Exercises*).

Goncourt for his novel and the document is incorporated into the text without significant transformation other than translation. Details pertaining to British circus performers, included in Frost's book, are transcribed in *Les Frères Zemganno*. Frost writes that one performer was 'born, as I may say, in the saw-dust, and brought up on the back of a horse'.[21] The same is said of performers in the novel, where the term is explained in a note: 'tous les gens nés dans la sciure de bois ou désireux d'y vivre' (p. 104). Frost relates that Alhambra Joe (the stage name of Joa Grimaldi) 'took [his] fakements nearly every evening to the 'ruins', as they were called, in Victoria Street', and elaborates on the 'Metropolitain Improvement Commission' and states that the 'place was the rendez-vous and free gymnasium of most of the gymnasts, acrobats, rope-dancers, and other professors of muscular sensationalism in the metropolis'.[22] None of this goes amiss in the *Les Frères Zemganno*: the ruins - 'les Ruines' (p. 104) - make an appearance. The route that Gianni and Nello follow on their journey through Britain is similar to the one described in Frost's account of Alhambra Joe, as both share the unlikely destinations that are Greenock (p. 108) and Carlisle (p. 110).[23] The fictional clowns spend a fortnight in Greenock - 'les deux frères allaient *étoiler* douze nuits à Greenock en Écosse' (p. 108) - and make their début as clowns in Carlisle in chapter thirty. In this manner, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt's lives are mapped onto the life of a historical circus performer. Their fictional autobiography (and emphasis should be placed on fiction) merges details of their life and the lives of others. The novel is thus not realist in autobiographical terms, as the characters do not represent one 'je' but several, not one circus but several models, but *Les Frères Zemganno* is nonetheless realist in its representation of the peregrinations of circuses. Once again, details are more realistic than the whole. The choices made in the use of documentation establish how fiction and reality converge in the process of writing. Moreover, documents are cut from a non-fiction text, written

[21] Thomas Frost, *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875), p. 225.
[22] *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities*, p. 227. 'Fakements' can mean a piece of clothing, a piece of stolen property or a piece of bodily manipulation.
[23] *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities*, pp. 230-3.

pseudonymously by a novelist, to be inserted almost verbatim into a work of fiction that uses them to establish its *vraisemblance* and corroborate its fictional 'argument'.

The need for detail to contribute to an 'effet-de-réel' is apparent in the names of the characters as well as in their voyaging. Goncourt himself is aware of the fantasy of the name Zemganno (see chapter 2 A for more on its origins), so much so that when Gianni and Nello Bescapé are ready to present their act to the public, they change their name and become the Zemgannos. The director of the circus reflects: 'Zemganno... mais il est vraiment original votre nom... il possède un diable de Z au commencement qui est comme une fanfare... on dirait une de nos ouvertures, vous savez, où il y a une sonnerie de clochettes dans une batterie de tambours' (p. 207). Apart from its bizarre sonority, the name evokes distant lands and the hybrid origins of the brothers. As Gianni says: 'C'est le nom que nous avions là-bas' (p. 208). Jacques Noiray speculates that the name evokes 'tzigane', 'zingane', or 'zingaor', all of which relate to travelling gypsies.[24] Interestingly, it is only when the brothers abandon the travelling life that they adopt an exotic name that is associated with travellers. The change of name in the novel belies a consciousness of the effect of a well-chosen name and erects a barrier between the brothers and their art, while highlighting the changing nature of their performances. There is no documentary trace of the name Zemganno, thereby reinforcing its originality.

If Zemganno appears highly imaginative, the same is not the case of first names in the novel. Two letters in the Goncourt correspondence deal with first names in the confessional novel, which may surprise as it is the most personal of Edmond de Goncourt's texts. There is no information relating to the name of Goncourt's own alter-ego, Gianni, but his brother Lionello (Nello), and his father Tommaso, are both introduced in a letter dated 21 October 1878 and signed G. Gavi. This letter deals

[24] 'Tristesse de l'acrobate: création artistique et fraternité dans *Les Frères Zemganno*', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 259 (2000), 91-110 (p. 105).

with Italian names, and more precisely, Tuscan names. Tuscany is revealed as the native region of Gavi, who writes: 'Quant aux noms que vous me demandez je vous en donneraient [sic] tant que vous voudrez... mais encore faudrait-il savoir à quelle [sic] parties d'Italie doivent appartenir les personnages, et à quelle classe de la société'.[25] Regardless of this request for further information, the names proposed by Gavi are retained by Goncourt. 'Tommaso' Bescapé, who, like Gavi, is originally from Tuscany, returns to winter in this region: he returns 'avec l'hiver dans son pays natal, et travaill[e] pendant le mauvais et dur temps en Lombardie et en Toscane' (p. 19). This geographic detail indicates that Gavi's comments were taken into account in the novel. Even if the stage name Zemganno is 'fabriqué', first names are not. Once again the blurring between reality and fictional fantasy worlds is brought to the forefront of the novel and is accentuated by its genesis. In addition, though hereditary causes play but a small role in the novel (as will be seen in chapter 4 B), the few documents that exist relating to the characters, rather than their environment, deal with names and provide a genealogical framework that is mentioned in the narrative.

Further evidence of documentation pertaining to names is provided by a second letter which deals with family names and which is written by an eminent contemporary of Goncourt's, Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883). A faithful of the 'groupe des cinq', Turgenev is questioned in order to contribute to the Russian genealogy of the Zemganno brothers. In an undated letter, Turgenev implies that Goncourt had requested names of famous Russian bohemians. [26] In the letter, Turgenev briefly explains the particularities of these names and finishes by listing examples of Russian names and diminutives. Goncourt chose 'Steucha' for the mother of his clowns and in the novel the origins of the name as outlined by Turgenev are repeated: 'Stépanida, en notre langue Etiennette, et qu'on appelait par le diminutif de son nom de là-bas, Steuchâ' (p. 20). When compared to Turgenev's own explanation the similarities are blinding:

[25] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22464, fol. 251-2.
[26] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22477, fol. 79.

'je pourrais vous citer des noms (diminutifs caressants) des bohémiennes célèbres en Russie. "Steucha" - (dim. de Stepanida, Etiennette). Elle a fait tourner les têtes de plusieurs générations entre 1820 et 1830'.[27] Once again, an historical figure has been inserted into the novel. This contributes to *vraisemblance* in terms of the representation of the world of the circus, but Steucha's foreignness is used as an explanation for her inability to love her husband, an inability that is passed on to her sons.

A final historical figure who is introduced by stealth into *Les Frères Zemganno* is, as Floyd Zulli demonstrates in 'Edmond de Goncourt's American Equestrienne', Adah Isaacs Menken.[28] Menken, a rider who first performed in Europe at the Astley circus in London (a circus which is mentioned in *Les Frères Zemganno*, p. 103) and later went to Paris, was acquainted with George Sand, Dumas père, Swinburne, Dickens and Gautier, and there can thus be no doubt that she was known to, or by, Goncourt. Zulli argues that Menken served as a model to Goncourt for his *femme fatale*, 'la' Tompkins. It is with the appearance of 'la' Tompkins that the novel's Decadent leanings are confirmed. This is a different type of 'document', as there are no traces of it other than the extreme coincidence between the fictional performer and the historical one, and it is difficult to say whether it could be considered a verifiable document or an unverifiable 'témoignage', since the latter has been applied to details of a more psychological nature, which would exclude Tompkins. Documentary details of all kinds are used in the service of Decadent themes.

Tompkins is one of very few women in the novel, a fact that was lauded by Huysmans as 'merveilleux' (*Corres. Huys-Gonc.*, letter 4, 2 May 1879, p. 54). Her role is related to a change in the role of riders in literature and the circus, identified by Louisa Jones who argues that as the nineteenth century progresses and the circus

[27] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22477, fol. 79.
[28] *French American Review*, 3 (1978-1979), 53-6.

becomes more elite, the pantomime figure of Columbine and the barebacked rider (which both Menken and Tompkins are), are depicted as being as dangerous in literature as they are on stage: pantomime becomes permeated by death.[29] Fittingly, Tompkins is the prime destructive force in the novel and her presence leads to a dramatic change of events. Though based on a historical figure, the role assigned to Tompkins in the novel introduces themes far from reality, themes that verge on the Decadent. Though there are many *femmes fatales* in the work of the Goncourts and other earlier authors of the nineteenth century, the themes associated with these earlier examples are not the same as those associated with Tompkins. Manette Salomon, for example, stifles and eventually destroys male artistic power, but is not associated with the cult of eccentricity or refinement. Tompkins, on the other hand, thrives on her fetish for disaster, travels Europe in search of hanging and natural catastrophes. In her work, she is driven by 'l'ambition de faire de l'impossible, du surhumain, des choses défendues par la nature et Dieu' (p. 174). In her spare time, she searches out the unusual, buys expensive pieces of art only to sequester them in a room that she never enters, and follows, essentially, the 'plaisir solitaire de la possession secrète de belles et uniques choses inconnues à tout le monde' (p. 180). This background, therefore, provides a framework within which to study the potentially Decadent nature of circus and pantomime and the reasoning behind the transposition of the Goncourts' life as authors pursuing artistic perfection onto the Zemgannos' life as performers pursuing the same goal in a different medium.

It is worth reiterating that the Zemganno brothers begin their lives and careers as *saltimbanques* or 'clowns' in their family's travelling circus. From the outset of the novel they are closely associated with 'the people', with a gypsy lifestyle, and are very distant from the high culture so beloved of rarefied late nineteenth-century Decadents. Due to this situation, the choice of this low form of art to represent the

[29] *Sad Clowns and Pale Pierrots: Literature and the Popular Comic Arts in Nineteenth-Century France* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, 1984), pp. 51 & 187.

Goncourt brothers seems to transpose into fiction not only specific lives, but the entire Naturalist movement. Many are the Naturalist novels that are set in working-class neighbourhoods or pastures; many are the novels that, like *Les Frères Zemganno*, situate one character's life within a much wider framework and study the effect of environment and family on that character (consider not only of the novels of Zola, Maupassant and the Goncourts, but of lesser-known authors such as Henri Céard and Paul Bonnetain); many are the novels that represent undistinguished characters from ignominious backgrounds. Yet, the Zemgannos are set apart from their peers by their refined artistic quest. They abandon the travelling circus because it does not offer sufficient opportunity for artistic innovation. Eventually they join a more metropolitan and more 'civilised' environment: the Parisian circus. Gianni and Nello's change of direction is representative of a wider change in the Goncourt *oeuvre*. The novels concentrate on more refined environments. There is a difference in focus from *Germinie Lacerteux* and *La Fille Élisa* to *La Faustin* and *Chérie*. Analogous modifications from lower to upper class subject matter can be observed in the works of other authors, as well. Huysmans for example, began his career with Naturalist influenced novels *Marthe, histoire d'une fille* (1876) and *Les Soeurs Vatard* (1879) only to later write *À Rebours* (1884) and *Là-bas* (1891). In fact, Christopher Lloyd writes that *Germinie Lacerteux* and *La Fille Élisa* are to *Marthe* and *Les Soeurs Vatard* what *La Faustin* is to *À Rebours*.[30] Much like Goncourt, Huysmans later rejected base Naturalist subjects and environments outright and turned to a refined, aestheticised and incense-filled version of Catholicism.

The end of the century saw an enormous shift in aesthetic focus, and this shift is announced in *Les Frères Zemganno*, as Zola rightly points out in *Le Voltaire*: 'M. Edmond de Goncourt dans *Les Frères Zemganno* a eu la caprice originale de sortir de la réalité immédiate pour entrer dans le domaine du rêve. Après le roman technique de *La Fille Élisa*, il a voulu montrer qu'il pouvait échapper à l'observation

[30] *J.-K. Huysmans and the fin-de-siècle Novel* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1990), p. 28.

exacte. Son nouveau livre est de la psychologie poétique, si l'on me permet ce terme'.[31] More than simply accepting Zola's term 'psychologie poétique', it can be adopted as it is highly appropriate to the 1879 novel. For, the novel recreates the Goncourts' motivations, the nervous psychological state that leads to artistic creation. While this psychological state is perhaps observed by the author with regard to his own circumstances (as the 'souvenirs' evoked earlier imply), it is hardly scientifically verifiable evidence. Nor is it, strictly speaking, historically verifiable. Once again, the distinction between fiction and reality, is highly problematically blurred. *Les Frères Zemganno* paints the psychological disposition of two poets of gymnastics, and this picture can be read as an analogy for much wider cultural changes, as a representation of the psychological disposition of a pre-millenial generation fearful of the unstoppable changes of progress and modernity. The novel leaves behind its roots in observed reality and instead focuses on interiority and on psychological states and facts that cannot be verified. In 1884 Louis Desprez deemed it 'une sorte de poème en prose'[32] and his definition highlights the extent to which observed reality is at the very least sidelined, and at most abandoned, in favour of poetry (there were no constraints on poetry to represent accurately the world surrounding it).

None of the above observations, however, offers an explanation as to why the circus was chosen as the medium through which to paint the tribulations of two artists in search of novelty and artistic purity. The difference between the descriptions of two performances in the novel sheds light on the choice of transposition and explains why the transposition is an effective analogy of the literary field in late nineteenth-century France. In the first pantomime, in chapter three, all the members of the Amphithéâtre Bescapé are introduced by means of a theatre bill. Their names are followed by descriptions of their particular talents. In chapter five, after summaries

[31] 'Revue dramatique et littéraire', *Le Voltaire*, 25 March 1879, p. 1. Zola was, in fact, defending his aesthetic against the perceived criticism of Naturalism contained in the preface to *Les Frères Zemganno.*

[32] *L'Évolution naturaliste* (Paris: Tresse, 1884), p. 116.

of other circus acts in chapter four (the Hercule's [p. 37], for instance, as well as Gianni's juggling feats [p. 38]), Tommaso Bescapé's 'pantomime sautante', *Le Sac enchanté*, is succinctly outlined in point form (the presentation of this pantomime, of course, reminds the reader of the process of documentation by virtue of the fact that it appears as would notes):

> 1.-Aux environs de la ville de Constantinople, représentée par un paravent, avec le haut découpé dans des formes de minarets, promenade du vieux Bescapé travesti en Anglaise, avec les lunettes bleues de rigueur, le voile feuille morte, une toilette britannique ridicule. 2. - Rencontre par l'Anglaise de deux eunuques noirs. 3. - Pantomime enjôleuse et immorale des eunuqes dénombrant à l'Anglaise tous les avantages et les plaisirs qu'elle trouverait dans le sérail du Grand Turc (p. 45).

This pantomime is performed with acrobatics, but is clearly based around a story, and this story is clearly designed to amuse with its bawdy humour. The situation is very different by the time Gianni and Nello perform their own 'invention sautante' at the end of the novel and, indeed, Gianni is described as 'surexcité par une singulière activité cérébrale [...], à l'invention abstraite de conceptions gymnastiques presque toujours irréalisables' (p. 135). The brothers' long-awaited and innovative jump is, in contrast to the earlier performance, described anything but succinctly, and is the focal point of ten chapters (56-66), in which the 'débuts des Frères Zemganno' (p. 211) are announced and speculated upon by the audience. At the premiere they eschew the 'fabulation' or narrative framework that was integral to their performances until this point and that was also integral to their father's performances. The new jump is devoid of points of reference external to the act itself. Like the authors of the *fin-de-siècle*, Gianni and Nello eventually reject representational and story-driven performances in favour of non-communicative and non-referential ones. The new jump is purposely devoid of storyline. Their bodies are the sole focal point of the performance.

> Il y avait encore la recherche de l'invention scénique, dont ils voulaient selon une ancienne habitude enguirlander leur gymnastique. Et Nello, le poète ordinaire des exercices fraternels, avait trouvé d'aimables imaginations, un cadre d'un fantastique souriant et des musiques qui étaient à la fois des échos d'ouragans et de soupirs de la Nature. Mais au dernier moment les deux frères faisaient la remarque que *l'osé* de leur tour disparaissait dans l'enjolivement de la mise en scène. D'un commun accord, ils se décidaient à être cette fois des gymnastes, uniquement des gymnastes, quitte plus tard pour redonner du nouveau à la chose vieillissante, à l'agrémenter de leur petite fabulation poétique (p. 200).

As announced in the preface to the novel with regard to Goncourt's own story, 'fabulation' is discarded by the Zemgannos in favour of a purer form of art. No story is needed to give context to Gianni and Nello's artistic daring-do, and this itself is innovative.

The Zemgannos discard the ancient habit of disguising art in story and in this transformation lies a move from low culture to abstract high culture, they move beyond realist representation and are left with only the act itself, art for art's sake. In addition, the art is abstract and attempts to surpass the limits of the body. At the same time, the Zemgannos' costumes become more elaborate. The difference between the two performances, therefore, sheds light on how developments in the circus, which is recognised as the lowest art-form,[33] mirror developments in the increasingly rarefied literature of the *fin-de-siècle*. In the same way that Gianni and Nello abandon story, so Edmond de Goncourt aims to in his post-1870 novels (he dismisses adventure stories and the likes of Eugène Sue in the preface, as shown in chapter 2 B).

The implications of representing the circus, which is the domain of illusion and deception, within a Realist framework are interesting, for the choice of environment seems to carry with it an implicit rejection of mimetism. Indeed, not all the descriptions in the novel are grounded in documentary reality. Some, which do not

[33] *Sad Clowns and Pale Pierrots*, pp. 14-16; Hugues Hotier calls it the 'spectacle le plus populaire'. *Le Vocabulaire du cirque et du music-hall en France* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Lille, 1972), p. 2.

form part of a Naturalist research framework, are much more grounded in fantasy and unreality than in documentation. The descriptions drawn more from national stereotypes than from documentary sources, for instance, depict the performing circus arts as hallucinatory and morbid. Initially, the circus in England is described in the following terms: 'le génie de la nation l'a marquée à son caractère de flegme et d'ennui noir, et [il] a façonné la gaieté, si l'on peut le dire, avec une espèce de comique splénétique' (p. 130). This harmless world of spleen and black humour evolves into a world infused with terrifying and grisly possibilities, a world built on observation of reality, but intent on deforming it. As such it has much in common with literary Decadence:

> Sinistre est devenue la clownerie anglaise [...]. Elle s'est faite terrifiante. Tous les émois anxieux et les frissonnements qui se lèvent des choses contemporaines, et sous le gris et le sans-couleur des apparences, leur tragique, leur dramatique, leur poignant morne, elle en fait sa proie, pour les resservir au public dans de l'acrobatisme. Il y a en elle de l'épouvantant pour le spectateur, de l'épouvantant fabriqué de petites observations cruelles, de petites notations féroces, de petites assimilations sans pitié des laideurs et des infirmités de la vie, grossies, outrées par l'*humour* de terribles caricaturistes et qui, dans la fantaisie du spectacle, se formule en un fantastique de cauchemar (p. 111).

In this illustration, the circus is presented as undergoing changes similar to those underway in literature, from mimetism to the 'fantastique'. The presentation of clowning as a sinister pastiche is almost Romantic in emphasis and is based on a (somewhat distorted) imitation of life. In contrast, the refusal of story outlined above is a different matter altogether, and is unmistakably *fin-de-siècle* insofar as it contains a momentary refusal to imitate life.

Furthermore, close reading of this passage reveals that the vocabulary employed to evoke the sinister nature of British performances is a vocabulary commonly associated with the Goncourtian literary aesthetic. 'Emois' and 'frissons' are an integral part of the 'nervosité', or the heightened artistic sensibility, that contributes

to 'écriture artiste'. In the preface to *Les Frères Zemganno*, for example, Goncourt states that writing makes him 'malad[e] nerveusement' (p. 3) and implies that any true artist must be of an overly sensitive disposition. However, it is not only in terms of style and temperament that the description of English clowning draws on literary analogy. The references to the 'petites observations cruelles' and 'petites notations féroces' (p. 111) of the clowns evoke the Naturalist process of literary creation which is based on pseudo-scientific observation and study of given environments. This process is alluded to in the preface to the novel as 'immenses emmagasinements d'observations' and 'analyse cruelle' (p. 2), amongst other examples. There is an obvious similarity in terminology, and certain words form part of both the discourse on the novel contained in the preface and the discourse on the circus contained in the novel. Curiously, the phrases used in the novel to describe the visual performance arts that are clowning and acrobatics are very closely associated with descriptions of *fin-de-siècle* writing, and the Goncourts' writing in particular. Indeed, chapter 31, which describes changes in the British circus, can be read as an analogy for changes in French literature. Though it is stated that the Zemgannos do not belong to the English tradition, there are too many similarities between this description and ones in the chapters immediately following it for this assertion to be taken at face value. The evolution of the English circus described in the novel functions, therefore, on two levels, as it relates to both the circus and literature. It engages with a Naturalist fixation with documents and also with a notion of reality feeding a nightmarish fictional dimension.

One critic posits the history of French nineteenth-century circus as a 'constant interaction throughout the century between the popular forms of circus and pantomime and the ever more elite forms which assimilated, adapted and interpreted them'.[34] This argument refers principally to the assimilation of English-style equestrian arts into the circus and pantomime in France, and accordingly, the

[34] *Sad Clowns and Pale Pierrots*, p. 11.

Decadent *femme fatale* of *Les Frères Zemganno* is an American equestrian. Moreover, the difference between *saltimbanque* and circus is described in chapter 25 as a result of horse-based acts. But *Les Frères Zemganno* is an illustration of another form of assimilation, as well, one in which the dying circus becomes a theme of literary exploitation. Concomitant with the death of the circus as the nineteenth century knew it – there were more permanent *chapiteaux* at the beginning of the century than the end – was the increasing prominence given to the circus as a literary theme. The circus was cherished by a certain kind of author who looked to the past and lost worlds for inspiration. By the end of the century popular theatrical arts were largely dead, but lived on in the hands of 'écrivains "cultivés"'.[35] By fictionalising the circus, *Les Frères Zemganno* attested to this artistic change.

Plot is minimal in *La Faustin* and *Chérie*, as we will see, but one hostile critic, the *Gazette de France*'s Armand de Pontmartin, argued that *Les Frères Zemganno* itself renounced traditional story-telling, calling it 'un ouvrage qui s'intitule roman, et qui, à travers des prodiges d'intempérance descriptive et un luxe inouï de détails techniques et spécialistes, arrive à la 249e page, [the end] sans qu'il soit possible d'apercevoir ombre ou lueur d'action, d'intrigue ou d'intérêt romanesque'.[36] Pontmartin, perhaps unwittingly admitting the fundamental shift towards Decadence in the novel, boldly goes on to equate deficit of intrigue with the decline of western civilisation and 'l'effondrement de la vraie France', for which even the most vitriolic critic must admit Edmond de Goncourt is not solely responsible. The main basis for Pontmartin's claim is the profession of the main characters:

> Mais les personnages de M. Edmond de Goncourt, dans ce roman *des Frères Zemganno*! ces gymnastes, ces acrobates, ces hercules, ces prêtres, ces

[35] Jean Starobinski, *Portrait de l'artiste en saltimbanque* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), p. 22.
[36] 'Semaines littéraires DLXXIII, M. Edmond de Goncourt, *Les Frères Zemganno*', *La Gazette de France*, 11 May 1879.

> *clowns*, qui ne sont, à vrai dire, que les parasites, les objets de luxe, les branches gourmandes de la démocratie ou plutôt de la classe populaire![37]

Not only are they parasites and proponents of luxury for its own sake, but they are rootless, without homeland, and therefore, for Pontmartin, impossible to understand. He criticises from an anti-democratic viewpoint that, oddly, Edmond de Goncourt could have shared. In *Les Frères Zemganno* there is a distinct move away from what Baudelaire, in 'De l'essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques', calls the 'comique significatif', understood as referential art, towards a conception of 'comique absolu', or a purer form of non-referential art that rids texts of intrigue and worships what hitherto had been a luxury no artist could afford, style for its own sake.[38] Refined style acted as a barrier between the author and the ever-growing public.

In the context of this 1879 novel of the circus, what appears as low culture or low art - taking place as it does in a popular environment and being performed by common artists - is in fact the most refined representation of the comic ideal of pure art. It pairs base environment, which fascinated both Naturalists and Decadents for different reasons, with cultivated art and upsets the boundaries between the two. Due to the autobiographical instability of the text, the quest of the Zemgannos is inextricably linked to the quest of the Goncourts. As such, *Les Frères Zemganno* is easily interpreted as a 'document humain' of Edmond de Goncourt's life. But, the pieces of 'reality', the human 'documents' that are incorporated into the novel, participate in the disruption of mimetic stability as they belong in equal measure to verifiable and unverifiable sources, they are neither Genettian documents nor 'témoignages', but a combination of both. The interplay between Realist detail and personal memories and quests illustrates how one novel interacts with and responds

[37] 'Semaines littéraires DLXXIII, M. Edmond de Goncourt, *Les Frères Zemganno*', *La Gazette de France*, 11 May 1879.
[38] Charles Baudelaire, 'L'Essence du rire' in *Critique d'art, suivi de Critique musicale*, ed. by Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 195.

to a much wider transformation within literary history. The analysis of the traces of *Les Frères Zemganno* that exist clarify many of the choices that contribute to the final version of a text that vacillates between representation of this world and fantasies of others. Details are drawn from different realities and contribute to the *vraisemblance* of the portrayal of the circus environment, but also destabilise it by foregrounding themes much more redolent of unreality and Decadence.

Chapter 3C
Document Humain
La Faustin: Fitting the Part

Even more so than *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin* is free from the hereditary prerogatives upon which the Naturalist novel, and many of the Goncourts' novels, are built: the eponymous heroine's origins are never described, there is no weighty family history of dementia, or acting, that contributes to her downfall. Rather, her downfall is a product of her double identity as actress - a very Decadent theme because it depicts the duplicity, duality and artifice of woman - and has much more to do with her profession than her background. In other instances, such as the cases of Annandale and Selwyn, characters' hereditary problems have as much to do with race as personal history. In terms of literary creation, the documentary origins of the novel reinforce the ambiguous genealogy of the characters and the move away from scientific explanations based in Naturalist cause and effect. The lack of specific genealogy of the main character - and of secondary characters - is a reflection of both the sources that contribute to the text and a wider aesthetic shift. The sources that are called upon, however, are deployed towards painting a specific thematic end that compromises the historical integrity of the novel as a study of a particular environment at a given point in time, and instead focuses on the neuroses of the *fin-de-siècle*. Because of these circumstances, *La Faustin* is replete with ambiguous genealogies that complicate the notions of 'historical reality' and 'accuracy' in the novel and diminish the novel's claim to documentary realism. As such, the text is far from the (unachievable) aims of the Goncourt brothers as expounded in *Germinie Lacerteux*. *La Faustin* is neither 'real' nor 'realistic', it is not a 'study' based on a particular empirical case, it does not 'come from the street', and it is scientific in neither content nor approach.

As numerous articles and letters to Goncourt testify, one fictional actress dominates *fin-de-siècle* French literature: La Faustin.[1] By contrast, nineteenth-century French theatre is dominated by two actresses, Rachel Félix (1820-1858) and, later, Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), though others, such as Réjane (1857-1920) were also influential.[2] Critics have speculated that Juliette Faustin is based on one or other of the two former, but no critic has suggested that Edmond de Goncourt's actress was based on both.[3] In actual fact, there is precious little documentary evidence to support either view - there is no 'carnet préparatoire' of the novel that could answer these types of questions. Nevertheless, comparisons between the fictional thespian and accounts of the historical actresses do provide important insights into the creative process leading to the novel as well as to the role of fact in Goncourt's fiction.

The lack of specific genealogy of Juliette Faustin, compared to Goncourt's other characters - even Chérie's parents are discussed - is undoubtedly related to, though not necessarily caused by, the lack of documentary sources relevant to her. Of the characters of the three final novels, Juliette is the one with the least information relating to her in the Goncourt correspondence. In this sense, she is disconnected from any family history, and stands alone among Goncourtian characters. On the level of plot, the link between the actress and family heritage is further weakened by the fact that she is unlikely to produce any progeny because her 'biological' instincts are taken over by 'theatrical' instincts: she is not a woman, she is an actress. Juliette is an example of 'insexualité' (p. 60), sterile, androgynous, and the notion of actors as

---

[1] Henri Céard, '*La Faustin*, par Edmond de Goncourt', *La Vie moderne*, 28 January 1882; Gustave Geffroy, 'Les livres: *La Faustin*', *La Justice*, 21 March 1882; Guy de Maupassant, 'Les Femmes de théâtre' *Le Gaulois*, 1 February 1882. Pierre-Jean Dufief writes that 'La Faustin, elle, recueille l'assentiment unanime des écrivains fin de siècle et devient le livre-culte d'une génération'. 'Les Goncourt précurseurs de la décadence', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 13-22 (p. 17).

[2] It is perhaps interesting to note that Rachel's full name was Élisabeth Rachel Félix and that in her youth she was called Élisa, which recalls another of Goncourt's novels. Nicole Toussaint du Wast, *Rachel, amours et tragédie* (Paris: Stock, 1980), pp. 18 and 96.

[3] Dottin-Orsini discusses the influence of Rachel. Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Les Actrices (Armande)*, ed. by Mireille Dottin-Orsini (Toulouse: Éditions Ombres, 2000), pp. 77 and 79.

'insexuel' is reiterated in *Chérie* where reference is made to 'la mimique insexuelle' (p. 65). There is mention in *La Faustin* of 'l'espèce de masculinité de l'artiste' (p. 102). Juliette's main limitation is that she is an actress. As Lord Annandale, obsessed by this, screams from the deathbed, 'Une artiste... vous n'êtes que cela... la femme incapable d'aimer' (p. 307). Whether this suppression of biology and femininity is voluntary or not, it fits into a very pessimistic, almost Schopenhauerian, view of reproduction and women (a view that is also on display in *Chérie*). This theme itself verges on the Decadent, and, indeed, in Decadent literature such as *La Marquise de Sade*, the theme of female sterility is taken to extremes.

The theatre and its female representatives long interested both Goncourt brothers: several biographical histories of individual eighteenth-century actresses were written by Edmond de Goncourt, including, *La Saint-Huberty* (1882), 'La Courtisane au théâtre',[4] *La Clairon (*1890), and *La Guimard* (1893). All of these illustrious figures were earlier introduced in some form or other in the joint writings of the Goncourt brothers (*La Femme au dix-huitième siècle*, for instance). In addition, a novel dealing with the theatre is projected early in the brothers' career and the idea resurfaces in 1871 as a novel 'sur la vie de théâtre' (*Journal*, 14 May 1871, 2, p. 436). A significant transformation of the original idea took place between 1871 and 1882, as the chapter devoted to Goncourtian titles demonstrates, for *La Faustin* deals more with a particular actress than with the theatre in general. In addition, in 1856 the slim volume *Les Actrices* (republished in 1892 as *Armande*), telling the story of actress Armande who joins a provincial playhouse, was published. Mireille Dottin-Orsini, modern editor of *Les Actrices*, has argued that the youthful 1856 work was based partly on Rachel and declares that with *Les Actrices* 'nous en sommes encore... aux féeries, aux vaudevilles, aux mélodrames, à la Fantaisie'.[5] Furthermore, Dottin-Orsini argues that the reason Juliette Faustin's past is not explored and explained in *La*

[4] Published in *Le Nouveau Décaméron* (Paris: Dentu, 1886), which I have not consulted.
[5] *Les Actrices (Armande)*, p. 17.

Faustin is that her past is, in fact, in *Les Actrices*.[6] If, as is suggested, Armande and Juliette share the same past, then there is a corresponding link between Rachel and Juliette Faustin. Consequently, *La Faustin* looks to the past work of the Goncourt brothers - *Les Actrices* - as well as to historical and biographical reality - Rachel - and testifies to a continuity of thematic interests over the course of Goncourt's pre- and post-1870 career. These factors indicate a creative continuance between mid and late nineteenth-century work. On a more general level, the link between the two texts suggests how the Romanticism of mid nineteenth-century literature is re-elaborated during the *fin-de-siècle*. Themes dealing with drama and introduced in joint works of the Goncourts are updated in Edmond's solo novel.

Importantly, the return to pre-Naturalist sources in *La Faustin* diminishes the aesthetic obligation both to document novels and to make novels historical documents in and of themselves. Another explanation for the lack of scientific method and documentation relating to actresses for *La Faustin* is Goncourt's mistrust of actors, expressed clearly on 2 October 1881 in the *Journal*. In response to a discussion with actor Got about preparing a role, Goncourt states:

> Les comédiens, quand vous les interrogez sur leur métier, vous racontent un tas de blagues. Got, aujourd'hui, ne voulait-il pas me persuader que l'intonation d'un vers, d'une phrase, un comédien ne la cherchait pas avec le bruit de sa bouche, que c'était une opération cérébrale et que le premier coup, l'acteur y arrivait, quand il l'avait cherchée avec sa cervelle. Alors, pourquoi Rachel, cette intonation, la cherchait-elle avec ses lèvres et sa langue, pendant une heure, une heure et demie? (2, p. 906).

Implicit in this comment is that Goncourt had enough resources as an historian of actresses not to have recourse to further documentation in order to write a fictional account and, more specifically, not to have to take the word of an actor as writ. This undermines the need to incorporate documents if they do not correspond to a pre-established vision and recalls Colin Burns' conception of Zolian truth as the author's

[6] *Les Actrices (Armande)*, p. 80.

truth rather than an external *a priori* truth. It also jeopardises the novel's claims to documentary accuracy.

The author's familiarity with actresses is further evidenced by the fact that he had seen both Rachel and Sarah Bernhardt perform, and was an acquaintance of Bernhardt, to whom he offered the lead in a theatrical adaptation of the 1882 novel (she declined: *Journal*, 22 Feb. 1894, 3, p. 921). Both Goncourt brothers dined with Rachel at their relative Nephtalie de Courmont's (*Journal*, 30 Aug.1892, 3, p. 749) and, according to one critic, attended the sale of Rachel's effects after her death.[7] Likewise, the last event Juliette Faustin attends before forsaking Paris is an auction of the effects of an unnamed actress (chapter 41). Furthermore, Théophile Gautier, author, poet and intimate friend of the Goncourts (Edmond de Goncourt wrote a preface to an early biography in 1878),[8] wrote of both Rachel and her interpretation of Phèdre in 1843 in *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, proving to what extent the literary world was captivated by the world of theatre and performance. Juliette's deficient genealogy could be due to the author's over-familiarity with the theatrical environment.

There are indications that the novel was based on both Rachel and Bernhardt. The method of acquiring a role described in *La Faustin* is an example of this as it bears relation to accounts of both Rachel and Bernhardt. It is known that Sarah Bernhardt visited her teacher François Régnier for advice on how to portray Phèdre in 1874.[9] Likewise, Eugène de Mirecourt, in an essay extremely critical of Rachel, points out that Rachel sought guidance from actor Samson (director of the Comédie Française)

---

[7] *Rachel, amours et tragédie*, p. 307. In addition, according to Ricatte, Goncourt was the godfather of the child of Rachel's sister Lia and Paul de Saint-Victor. *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* (Paris: PUF, 1960), p. 171, note 2.

[8] Emile Bergerat, *Théophile Gautier; entretiens, souvenirs et correspondance* (Paris: Charpentier, 1879).

[9] Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (NY: Alfred A Knopf, 1991), p. 125.

whenever she created a new role.[10] In much the same fashion, La Faustin visits two teachers during her apprenticeship as Phèdre, once in chapter three, once in chapter twenty. In chapter three, the actress hears Euripides' version of *Phèdre*, called *Hippolytus* (this version is recommended to her by Sainte-Beuve, p. 34). The older play ties La Faustin to Rachel, as a remark from Gautier illustrates: '[Rachel] vous rapportait tout de suite à l'antiquité la plus pure. C'était la Phèdre d'Euridipe, non plus celle de Racine'.[11] This comment strengthens the interpretation of La Faustin as Rachel, for Juliette herself searches for antique inspiration from tutor Athanadiasis in order to renew Racine's play. In addition, a critic named 'Théo', who finds no appeal in Racine, is present on the opening night in the novel (p. 125). In this manner the historical Gautier is written into the novel. As a result of this name-dropping, the novel is situated in time and its 'reality' is signified. A further similarity between Rachel and La Faustin is that the former abruptly abandons the theatre for several months after thirteen stagings of *Cleopatra* and retires to the countryside.[12] This same course of action is taken by Juliette who forsakes *Phèdre* for her lover after few performances and flees with him to Lake Constance. There are, therefore, parallels between the fictional and historical characters and Goncourt, if anything, borrows incidents and details from the historical actress' life in order to create his own actress who is plagued by duality, by the inability to escape the theatre without escaping it physically, and by the inability to love which is contingent upon the former in the novel, but not necessarily in life.

The meeting of teacher and student in chapter twenty raises different questions. In this instance, Juliette visits the Marquis de Fontebise where she states that 'il y a positivement deux femmes qui ne se tiennent pas dans ce rôle' (p. 165). Not only is Juliette caught between being a woman and being an actress, but her theatrical

---

[10] *Rachel* (Paris: Havard, 1857), p. 52.
[11] *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans, deuxième série* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1968), p. 424.
[12] *Rachel, amours et tragédie*, p. 129.

character is divided as well. Phèdre belongs to both Euripides and Racine and is torn between her roles as lover, wife and mother. But Phèdre's dilemma does not set Juliette thinking about her origins, as it does Renée Saccard in *La Curée* (1871), where the presentation of debased incestuous love verges on the Decadent. Sara Via argues that while Renée's origins are not discussed in Zola's novel, a performance of *Phèdre* sparks her curiosity on the subject.[13] *La Faustin* posits that the only way for an actress to portray Phèdre's duality is to abandon bourgeois existence and live art to the full. Juliette's senses must, according to Fontebise, be excited, she must feel Phèdre's passion and pain. A true misogynist, Fontebise suggests this as a solution: 'Trouve vite un mécréant d'amant qui te batte… et que tu aimes… ça te donnera peut-être le *la* du rôle' (p. 168).

The complex issue of how to represent theatrical dramatisation, and how to write a novelistic character portraying a divided character in a story that is itself divided between two plays that are distant in time and thematic focus, was understandably of interest to the author. An 1881 letter from Claudius Popelin demonstrates that Goncourt himself sought advice for depicting *Phèdre*'s dual Greek-French origins in his novel. Popelin's letter contains a 'traduction littérale' of a passage of Euripides' play and specifies that: 'ces premiers vers d'Hippolyte c'est Aphrodite qui les prononce'.[14] This letter explains from whence the line of Greek in the novel stems (it is translated as 'Je m'appelle Vénus, la déese au renom répandu parmi les mortels et dans le ciel': p. 35). It also testifies to a need for accuracy that is not required of other details, such as Juliette's alleged duality, for Popelin transcribes the verses in Greek in the left column and the French translation in a parallel column. He notes: 'Je vous ai remis les vers afin de vous garantir l'accentuation'. Another letter, from José-Maria de Heredia states 'voici le premier vers de la Phèdre d'Euripide de la belle main de

[13] 'En effet, sa Phèdre-Racine est loin d'être la Phèdre racinienne, aussi loin qu'en sera Juliette Meuriot. Et on ne parle pas de ses origines, bien que Renée s'interroge en voyant une représentation de la tragédie racinienne, pour savoir "de quel sang elle pouvait être"'. 'Une Phèdre décadente chez les naturalistes', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 153 (1974), 29-38 (p. 30).
[14] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22473 fol. 53r.

Leconte de Lisle'.[15] Even without this knowledge, however, there is a tension in the novel between two competing visions of Phèdre. Juliette herself does not know from whence her character stems. Given the novel's premise that actresses are divided between their status as women and their status as performers who assume fictional identities, this imbalance in Phèdre, who is described as the 'grande hystérique légendaire' (p. 99), necessarily has a destabilising effect on Juliette.

The novel itself mentions several historical actresses by name and even compares La Faustin to Rachel : 'les uns mettant la nouvelle tragédienne au-dessus de Rachel' (p. 175). Certain critics posit Sarah Bernhardt as a possible model for the novel. Certainly, this is the opinion of Catherine Simon Bacchi, Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, as well as a new book on Sarah's life published by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. These three biographical studies maintain that Sarah was the muse and model of many authors, including Goncourt, the first writing that 'c'est Sarah Bernhardt qui servit de modèle à Edmond de Goncourt pour son roman *Faustin*', the second that 'several *romans-à-clef* about Sarah's life, almost as lubricious as *Barnum*, were to be published, among them Edmond de Goncourt's *La Faustin*, Félicien Champsaur's *Dinah Samuel*, and Jean Lorrain's *Le Tréteau*.' [16] Nowhere, however, does the author reveal explicitly who his models are, nor does the novel reveal Juliette's origins. Documents in the Bibliothèque Nationale point to a different, yet complementary, conclusion to that proposed by Simon Bacchi *et al*, one that considers the process of creation and inspiration as not nearly so absolute and straightforward as presented above.

There are two notable letters from Rachel's sister, Dinah Félix, in the Goncourt correspondence. The first, dated 16 February 1881, is no doubt in response to a query

[15] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22465 fol. 248. He also provided Goncourt with a Spanish sentence that is used in *La Faustin*: B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22465 fols 252-3.
[16] Catherine Simon-Bacchi, *Sarah Bernhardt: mythe et réalité* (Paris: Presses universitaires de la S.E.D.A.G., 1984), p. 76; *The Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Berhardt*, p. 27; Noëlle Guibert, *Portrait(s) de Sarah Bernhardt* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2000).

from Goncourt. Félix informs Goncourt that the registers of rehearsals of the Comédie Française have disappeared, but that Rachel rehearsed tragic roles between fifteen and twenty times. The letter ends by promising to inform Goncourt of the next rehearsal of a tragedy.[17] Three months later (29 May 1881), Dinah Félix wrote again in order to invite Goncourt to attend a rehearsal of 'la tragédie d'Oedipe de Monsieur Lacroix'.[18] A visit is paid by the author to the Théâtre Français on 15 June 1881 where he visits the actresses' dressing rooms (these events are described in the *Journal*, 2, p. 897). This is the only evidence in the *Journal* and in the Goncourt correspondence of research 'pris sur le vif' for *La Faustin* between its publication and the publication of *Les Frères Zemganno*. Other references to research 'sur-le-vif' predate both the novel and Edmond's solo career, and confirm a continuity between pre and post-1870 novels (Mireille Dottin-Orsini's article 'Les Frères Goncourt et le "roman des actrices"' gives a comprehensive account of pre-1870 research). Contemporary dressing rooms and plays serve as a backdrop for a drama that could take place in either the late nineteenth century if based on Sarah Bernhardt, the mid nineteenth century if based on Rachel, or the eighteenth century if based on any number of actresses who caught Goncourt's attention as an historian and biographer. Alternatively, the novel can be interpreted as atemporal due to the fact that it is an amalgamation of all of these details and eras, due to the fact that few specific references to time are made.[19]

---

[17] 'Vertant avait bien autrefois mis sur deux ou trois registres les répétitions et les représentations de chaque pièce qui se donnait à la Comédie Française, mais il a interrompu son travail et les registres qui existaient sont introuvables aujourd'hui, il n'y en a plus trace à nos archives! Maintenant le bon Vertant croit se souvenir que Rachel répétait une tragédie quinze ou vingt fois. J'ai prié notre régisseur de m'informer lorque [sic] une tragédie sera mise à l'étude [,] pour l'instant il n'en est pas question.' B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22462 fols 75-6.

[18] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22462 fol. 77.

[19] The temporal situation of the novel is further complicated by the fact that all of the books held in the Goncourt library that deal with the theatre are from the eighteenth century. Cf. Alidor Delzant, *Bibliothèque des Goncourt, XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Imprimerie de Motteroz, n.d.), pp. 62-3. The same applies to French circus books consulted for *Les Frères Zemganno* - the majority are pre-nineteenth century.

Juliette announces that as far as her costume is concerned, 'je m'en fiche pas mal d'être bien historiquement' (p. 106), and Goncourt seems to adopt the same position relative to his character. The enigmatic origins of the main character - both in terms of the process of literary creation and in terms of story - make it difficult to situate the novel historically, and this deviates dramatically from earlier works by the Goncourt brothers. Previous works are situated quite expressly in specific environments - modern Paris in most cases - much like Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* takes place during the Second Empire. In *Germinie Lacerteux*, for instance, a precise date is provided for Mlle Varendeuil's birth - 1782 - and her childhood during the Revolution has a direct effect on her circumstances as an adult. In *La Faustin*, absence of basis in a historical moment displaces attention from the 'reality' and referentiality of the story to its 'unreality'. What can be traced of her genealogy relates to her name, and this is drawn from fictional and legendary sources, as Thorel-Cailleteau makes admirably clear:

> Mais elle [Juliette Faustin] entretient avec son rôle, en tant que rôle, un rapport ambigu, qui s'inscrit jusque dans son nom: Faustin peut en effet rappeler Fausta, l'épouse de Constantin dont la légende veut qu'ayant entretenu avec son beau-fils Crispus des relations coupables [not unlike Phèdre], elle ait entrainé la mort de celui-ci, avant d'être elle-même étouffée dans un bain chaud. De plus l'actrice se prénomme Juliette, ce qui rappelle évidemment Shakespeare et un personnage bien incompatible avec celui de Phèdre... mais aussi la descendance de Vénus, s'il faut croire Jules César, qui, via Iule, se prétendait issu de la déesse. En La Faustin s'additionnent ainsi des rôles qui vont en permanence la piéger, lui interdisant tout accès direct à la réalité, qu'elle s'emploie toujours à désincarner.[20]

The precise nature of *La Faustin* as fiction, as opposed to a 'true' story, as the Goncourts so valiantly attempt to claim with regard to *Germinie*, is underscored. The atemporal framework in *La Faustin* is a direct result of the multiple origins of the main character and make Juliette almost emblematic; but, even without this genetic

[20] *La Tentation du livre sur rien: naturalisme et décadence* (Mont-de-Marsan: Éditions interuniversitaires, 1994), pp 205-6.

framework, the protagonist is alienated from heredity by virtue of the fact that her origins are never discussed in the text.

The imprecise dating and history applies just as much to other characters, notably Lord Annandale and George Selwyn, as it does to Juliette, but contributes to different thematic issues including the corruption and perversion of aristocrats who inhabit artificial paradises and hells of their own creation. Goncourtian critic Pierre Bourdat traces Lord Annandale's genealogy - or more precisely the origins of his name - through the India of Kipling to a love story and, finally, Dumfriesshire, location of the Scottish Annandale. Bourdat's conclusions in 'A propos d'Annandale, hypothèse d'une source indienne de *La Faustin*' are based largely on the fact that Annandale valley is to be found in Simla, India, the summer capital of Imperial India. In *La Faustin*, Lord Annandale is secretary to the Indian Viceroy, and historically, the Viceroy of India was of a Dumfries family, the Hope-Johnstones.[21] Having established these facts, Bourdat formulates the following important question regarding the source of Edmond's knowledge of the British Empire and the name Annandale:

> Dès lors se pose la question de savoir si Edmond de Goncourt a trouvé celui-ci [le nom] dans les annales du gotha d'outre-Manche, directement et sans passer par l'Inde, ce qui n'est pas impossible. Dans le cas contraire, notre hypothèse demeure valable d'un récit fait de vive voix au romancier, ou d'une lecture qu'il aurait faite, sur la popularité du lieu-dit d'Annandale dans le milieu de l'Indian Service.[22]

Bourdat's unresolved questions are answered in the Goncourt correspondence by a writer that Bourdat himself names in passing as an acquaintance of the author: Theodore Child (1855-1892), an English author who brought George Moore to

[21] 'A propos d'Annandale, hypothèse d'une source indienne de *La Faustin*', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 4 (1995-1996), 245-8 (p. 247).
[22] 'A propos d'Annandale', p. 247.

Edmond de Goncourt's grenier.[23] On 4 March 1881, Child writes a lengthy letter to Goncourt on the subject of the British aristocracy.[24] To all appearances, this letter is in response to a request for information by the author. Child writes: 'Je vous ai trouvé quelques titres... Vous choisirez et si vous ne trouvez rien à votre goût je vous en ferai encore'.[25] What is more, Child goes on to specify that the names that he has provided are no longer in use by the British nobility: 'Dans tous les cas voicis [sic] quelques familles fictives que je viens d'imaginer en ayant soin d'éviter les noms réelment [sic] portés par des familles nobles'.[26] He then overestimates Goncourt's Naturalist zeal and offers to provide a 'table généalogique',[27] of which there is no trace in either Edmond de Goncourt's correspondence or novel. *La Faustin* itself discards much of the genealogy invented by Child: the details of Annandale's family are few and far between - his mother is French, his aunt is mad, and his father would have disowned him due to his relationship with an actress ('prenant peur de son amour pour elle', p. 184) - and are detached from a cause and effect formula. Moreoever, as will be shown below, it is not suggested that Annandale's illness arises out of any particular hereditary predispositions.

Included with Child's letter, in note form on the three final pages, are records of six imaginary families and the appropriate forms of address to be used when referring to them (indeed Child is at great pains to explain the workings of 'la pairie anglaise' to his correspondent). Despite Child's careful family circles, Goncourt borrows elements from two separate families to christen his actress' lover. Child's 'Viscount Annandale' is Lord Annandale's namesake. The given name of the fictional peer is William Rayne, and this is adapted from a separate family group in Child's letter:

---

[23] 'A propos d'Annandale', p. 247; Little is known of Child. Julia Daudet mentions him as a visitor to Goncourt's 'Grenier': *Souvenirs autour d'un groupe littéraire* (Paris: Charpentier, 1910), p. 149.
[24] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22457 fols 132-136.
[25] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22457 fol. 132.
[26] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22457 fol. 133. Lawyer Georges Faustin wished that Goncourt had taken this care himself and wrote to the author in 1891 [?] requesting that the name of both the book and the main character be changed. B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22462 fols 59-61.
[27] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22457 fol. 133.

Rayne is the family-name of the so-called 'Duke of Pevensey'. In the letter, Charles Henry, Philip, Henry, Wilfrid James, Algernon, Alfred, Julian are designated as the Duke's children. There is no evidence of a William. Goncourt combines identities to create the fictional Annandale, but is not ignorant of the evocative powers of the name.

There can be no telling whether Child knew of the history of the names he provided or, indeed, whether he invented them or, as he suggests, found them. Certainly the similarities that Pierre Bourdat has identified between 'reality' and the novel are too marked to be mere coincidence. What is certain is that the name 'William Rayne, Lord Annandale' contributes to an aura of mystery. Against the background of Annandale in India, Juliette Faustin's romance gains exotic and idyllic connotations. While the two lovers are never together in India, it is specified that Juliette is the lover of a man who has been attacked by a tiger while there in an official capacity. This attack triggers dreams: 'une chasse au tigre donnée par le vice-roi des Indes, une chasse dans laquelle il y avait un blessé qu'elle voyait tantôt avec la figure de William Rayne, tantôt avec la figure d'un homme inconnu' (p. 87).

The Byronic nature of her love is intensified still more by the Scottish element in the history of the courtship, both in the setting of the lovers' first encounter and in the symbolism of the names. The historical symbolism of William Rayne's title is consummated by the fact that the most famous historical Lord Annandale is Robert the Bruce, and this associates the fictional Lord to an ancient line. Moreover, the moss-covered castle, the ever encroaching mist, the overgrown forest intruding on the grounds of the 'château en Écosse' (p. 5) are all familiar topoï that are used to establish a gothic atmosphere in Romantic literature, and will all be modernised in *fin-de-siècle* literature. This is stressed by Jean Pierrot who conceives of the link between Romanticism and Decadence as follows: 'In the context of the history of the imagination, the decadent esthetic... constitutes a major stage in the continuous

development that had its source in Romantic 'fancy' and led eventually to the equivocal wonderland of surrealism'.[28] In *La Faustin*, 'fancy' is present on the level of escape: all three main characters seek to escape from their reality. Selwyn - who will be studied in more detail shortly - escapes nature through perversion, Annandale escapes the restrictions of his class through travel and love with an actress, Juliette attempts to suppress her duality by escaping the theatre for faraway wonderlands, and, tellingly, by reading de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* and listening to Beethoven. In addition, the presence of white peacocks - which are likened to 'de blanches âmes de trépassées, habillées du satin d'une robe de mariée' (p. 6) - at the Scottish castle (surrounded by the 'verdures... des limbes', p. 6) would be picked up by Decadent writers, as Mireille Dottin-Orsini has elsewhere proven.[29] Peacocks themselves are naturally Decadent animals insofar as they are both outrageously decorated and degenerate, witness the fact that they are unable to fulfil the role normally assigned to birds in nature: flight. White peacocks are even more unnatural (or anti-natural) as they lack the flamboyant colourings of most peacocks. The birds are drained of colour and are spectral, ghostly. The otherworldly theme, or the theme of the artificial paradise, is also carried to the retreat at Lake Constance, remarkable for the 'Moyen Age artificiel de certaines parties des constructions' (p. 289). Here, Annadale sleeps in red silk sheets in a 'gothique moderne' (p. 302) bed amidst the 'mobilier des drames du passé' (p. 302). The name Annandale, while being accurate and 'realistic', and chosen after research, belongs to both a realist and a symbolic aesthetic. As such, it demonstrates to what extent the idea that the novel

---

[28] *The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900*, trans. by Derek Coltman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 9.

[29] '*La Faustin*, les paons blancs et l'agonie sardonique' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 247-60. Dottin-Orsini traces the sources of the Juliette in the *Journal* in one section of her article and in another discusses occurrences of white peacocks in later literature. Notable are Robert de Montesquiou's poem 'Offrande à Edmond de Goncourt' read to the dedicacee by Sarah Bernhardt (3 March 1895) and published in *Les Hortensias bleus*, and Jean Lorrain's poem 'Les paons blancs'. The birds make appearances in Jules Laforgue's *L'Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune* (1886) and *Moralités légendaires* (1887), as well as in Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. Marie de Régnier wrote a poem entitled 'Les Paons', Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, M.S.S. 14363, fols 68-9. In July 1881, as the novel was being completed, the author was visiting relatives at Jean d'Heurs in Lorraine and notes the presence of peacocks on their property (*Journal*, 20 July 1881, 2, p. 902). This is a possible source of the peacocks.

should be based on the 'document humain' participates in an end-result that is far from referential and far from the prerogatives of Naturalist literature. Georges Peylet corroborates this view. His assessment holds that the novel leaves behind the aesthetic of the 'document humain':

> En apparence donc, [Goncourt] continue à suivre le modèle naturaliste. Dans *La Faustin* comme dans *Germinie Lacerteux*, il semble se pencher sur un cas pathologique en étudiant un système nerveux d'actrice. En réalité le romancier met en place un art maniériste qui se détache du réel qu'il prétend étudier, au point que l'objet initial d'étude semble se vider de son contenu... Le contenu de *La Faustin* cesse d'être réaliste à partir du moment où l'art de Goncourt ne se situe pas directement sur le plan de la *mimesis* mais se place sur celui du fantasme.[30]

Everything contrives to make the romance between Lord Annandale and La Faustin seem unreal or ethereal: the setting, which is linked to Annandale's name, is a backdrop to the performance that is La Faustin's love. In an early review of the novel, Maupassant focused on the performance-like aspect of romance when discussing the accuracy of Goncourt's representation of actresses in love:

> Quelque captée que soit leur étreinte, n'y a-t-il pas toujours un peu de mise en scène dans leurs manifestations, un peu de déclamation dans leurs ardeurs? Ne jouent-elles pas, malgré elles, une comédie ou un drame d'amour avec des réminiscences des pièces, des intonations apprises?'[31]

This opinion is supported by a passage from the novel. Juliette's second performance of Phèdre is triumphant and the narrator warns that the actress and the character are in the process of being inextricably united: 'Et les paroles de Racine ne racontaient plus au public l'amour de la femme de Thésée, mais racontaient à William l'amour de Juliette, et, avec l'ombre des fôrets de la Grèce, elle lui parlait de l'ombre des bois de l'Écosse' (p. 177). Duality, ambiguity, and artifice plague the novel, nothing is as it

[30] 'L'Art maniériste d'Edmond de Goncourt dans *La Faustin* ou la déviation du modèle naturaliste', in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 261-74 (p. 264).
[31] 'Les Femmes de théâtre', *Le Gaulois*, 1 Feb. 1882.

seems. Phèdre is divided between Greece and France; Annandale is also known as William Rayne and is divided between Scotland, England, India, and France; the main character, finally, is referred to as both Juliette and La Faustin. The play is confused with La Faustin's own life, and her own love is plagued by the presence of performance and the theatre. As she states in relation to time spent in the Hôtel de Flandres in Brussels, which was permeated by organ music from the church next door, 'N'aimons-nous pas quelquefois un homme pour les circonstances dans lesquelles nous l'avons aimé?' (p. 4). The roots of the lovers' romance can only be traced to environments that are exotic gothic - India, Scotland and Belgium - where their romance contributes to a storybook version of love and in which they act out roles. Everything contributes to an aesthetic of performance. Nothing is as it seems because Juliette and Annandale each belong to two realms, the one immediate, the one distant in time and space. The documentary detail of Annandale's life contributes to this theme whose *vraisemblance* is far from verifiable.

Though it is impossible to identify one particular source for Annandale, it would seem that the name provided by Child was selected by Goncourt due in large part to its historical significance. The name allows the character to evoke the two equally distant and fantastic worlds of India and Scotland without fear of realist inaccuracy. However, the name also ties the character to two exotic and mysterious mythologised worlds, at least one of which - the realm of Scottish legend and history - was popular in the nineteenth century (the vogue for Walter Scott and, later, R.L. Stevenson attests to this - Edmond himself was familiar with Scott's novels).[32] Huysmans praises the settings of the novel, and comments on the 'surprenants et quasi-paradisiaques paysages Écossais et Allemands' (*Corres. Huys-Gonc*, letter 11, 19 Jan. 1882, pp. 71-2). The origins of the name Annandale, therefore, provide a clear illustration of the use of documentation to provide a grounding in both myth and

[32] Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, based on Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, is the opera that Chérie attends immediately before dying and the opera that Emma Bovary listens to before embarking on a disastrous affair.

reality. William Rayne's origins are an example of the manner in which 'documents' can be adapted to contribute to a certain imaginary tradition whose significance lies in more than 'effet-de-réel'. The name has much to do with an imaginary popular in Romantic and Decadent novels, but not rigidly placed in a specific temporal framework in the fiction.

Theodore Child, it seems, uncannily suggested a name which would have thematic resonance beyond what he could have expected. Nor is Annandale his sole surprisingly appropriate suggestion - he also helps in the creation of Annandale's nemesis. 'Georges Selwyn...c'est un *sadique*.' (p. 285): this is how Juliette Faustin's lover describes his newly arrived friend. The word 'satanique' is also used in relation to Selwyn and, in fact, it binds the two men together. Whereas Selwyn is an 'apôtre satanique du mal' (p. 287), Annandale's face is described as 'une sorte d'épouvantable caricature satanique' (p. 306). The reappearance of the degraded and corrupt Englishman, the reforging of his childhood 'amitiés funestes, impies' (p. 287) with William Rayne, brings about the eventual degeneration and demise of Lord Annandale. There are two possible documentary sources for Selwyn, the one pertaining solely to his name, the other pertaining to both name and character. Evidence indicates that the name 'George Selwyn' was proposed to Edmond de Goncourt in the aforementioned letter from Theodore Child, on 4 March 1881. Indeed, Selwyn figures in the first group of names in the letter. It is unclear from the correspondence whether Child was aware of the characteristics that were to be ascribed to the names, as he only states that they 'sonnent bien à mon oreille', there is no more explicit clue as to what Goncourt had told him regarding the novel. Nonetheless, Child proposes the following family history for the Selwyns:

> Baron Avondell
> nom de famille Henry Selwyn
> titre officiel Baron Avondell
> titre ordinaire Lord Avondell
> les fils porteraient tous le titre

d'Honorable E.g. The Honourable Julian Pelham Selwyn... The Honourable George Selwyn etc.[33]

There can thus be no doubt that Child's letter is the source of the name Selwyn.

In the novel, the titles that are so eloquently explained by Child are presented with what can only be deemed mockery. On first presentation, the sadistic Englishman is repeatedly named as "l'honorable' Georges Selwyn' (pp. 272-4, 281, 290, 292), and the context of this presentation detracts from his dignity and nobility while adding to his eccentricity. The irony of the inverted commas is reinforced by a description that is not particularly flattering:

> On dîna - et tout en buvant tout le temps de l'eau-de-vie au lieu du vin, et ne mangeant que d'un potage à la queue de boeuf à faire venir des ampoules sur la langue, et d'une salade de concombres dont il vida le ravier, - 'l'honorable' Georges Selwyn fit les frais d'une conversation sur la situation politique de l'Allemagne, les diplomates anglais du continent, les salons de Vienne, le théâtre de Racine et de Corneille, formulant des jugements d'homme d'Etat, racontant des anecdotes, laissant échapper des mots profonds, tirant de sa mémoire des citations interminables, montrant une connaissance extraordinaire de toutes les littératures de l'Europe, et cela sans un symptôme d'ivresse, et dans une langue française se débrouillant d'heure en heure, et devenant incisive, méchante, et parfois atrocement gouailleuse (pp. 272-3).

Selwyn is presented as something of a dilettante man of the world. Indeed, as Mario Praz explains, Selwyn was a man about town: 'George Augustus Selwyn (1719-91), [was] one of the most conspicuous figures of society under George III'.[34] Whether Theodore Child, who is so conscious of British titles, was aware of this coincidence of names is a matter for speculation. That Edmond de Goncourt should be familiar with Selwyn is, as Praz rightly argues, almost unquestionable: 'The name of the

[33] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22457 fol. 134r.

[34] Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. by Angus Davidson (London: OUP, 1970), p. 415. Praz's insights are powerful, yet his study furnishes a fine example of the way in which Edmond's novels are subsumed under the novels of the Goncourts. He refers repeatedly to the Goncourt brothers' *La Faustin*.

eighteenth-century sadist must have been well known to the Goncourts, who were keen students of that particular period'.[35] The most plausible genealogy for Selwyn, therefore, as for Annandale, is that the name was chosen from the many proffered by Child on account of its historical antecedent and its topical connotations.

That the real Selwyn was remarkable in the eighteenth century due to his strange habits, particularly his obsession with public executions, offers fitting parallels for the Goncourtian protagonist, who is decidedly debauched.[36] The fictional Selwyn, owner of a 'petite maison sur les côtes de Bretagne' called the '*Chaumière de Dolmancé*' (p. 292), has theories on love 'où il y [a] de l'assassin' (p. 287). Fittingly, Selwyn's behaviour conforms to the image of the chevalier de Dolmancé created by the Marquis de Sade in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795). Because of these similarities in personality, it is no exaggeration to say that, for thematic reasons, the name selected itself from the list of possibles presented by Child.

The obvious question that presents itself with the presence of this eighteenth-century character is one of dating: in what period is the novel set? Does the fictional Selwyn represent the historical Selwyn? The presence of the eighteenth-century figure disrupts the historical accuracy of a novel that for all intents and purposes points to a nineteenth-century setting, especially insofar as Juliette Faustin herself has been compared to Rachel Félix and Sarah Bernhardt, and insofar as Félix Braquemond designs part of her apartment and Jules Janin (1804-1874), Saint-Victor (1825-1881), and Villemessant (1812-1879), all figures from the nineteenth century, are named as journalists present at the premiere of *Phèdre* (pp. 125-6). This confusion of temporal issues - also evident in the eighteenth-century books that likely contributed to the novel - for instance, three treatises on fencing in the eighteenth century in Goncourt's

---

[35] *The Romantic Agony*, p. 416.

[36] John Heneage Jesse, *Memoirs of Celebrated Etonians: including Henry Fielding, the Earl of Chatham, Horne Tooke, Horace Walpole, George Grenville, Thomas Gray, George Selwyn, Lord North, Earl of Bute, Earl Temple, etc.*, 2 vols (London: R. Bentley, 1875), 1, p. 104.

possession (Juliette is instructed in the arts) -[37] means that the novel transcends any particular historical boundaries and is instead timeless and distant from the everyday reality of the Second Empire.

While the genesis of Selwyn can be reconstructed using Child's letter, the themes attached to his character and his character's genealogy remain the same with or without reference to the documentary origins. Regardless of what is known of the real Selwyn, the fictional Selwyn's past is only vaguely hinted at in the text, and this through appearances: his features are 'vieux comme le monde' (p. 273) and connect him to a declining civilisation. Physical degeneracy and general social decline are powerfully felt at the end of the nineteenth century, when European civilisations underwent revolutionary transformations following industrialisation and democracy - the aristocracy, of which Selwyn is a member, is perceived as being in an unstoppable state of decline. Though the fictional Selwyn suffers from nervous disorders that are a result of his physiology, his maladies are not linked to any extensive family history, but to a more general history of the decline of civilisation. His individual heritage is alluded to only once by reference to a distinctive and uncanny physical trait:

> L'homme prenait encore un caractère étrange, de ce qu'au milieu de ses cheveux, très noirs, une mèche blanche - la mèche, disait-il, qu'avaient tous les membres de sa famille - était arrangée et mise en évidence avec une certaine affectation (p. 274).

Like Selwyn's nervous disorders, the overemphasised strand of white hair is significant because of the dandyesque aspect it lends Selwyn's appearance (he emphasises this particular attribute), rather than because of the medical condition that causes it. That his family all have this characteristic is of less importance than the

[37] *Bibliothèque des Goncourt, XVIIIe siècle*, p. 51: *Le maître d'armes ou l'abrégé de l'exercice de l'épée* (1737), *Nouveau traité de l'art des armes* (1786), *L'Art des armes, où l'on donne l'application de la théorie à la pratique de cet art...* (1788). Do these contribute to Juliette's near lascivious meeting with the fencer?

manner in which Selwyn grooms himself with affectation. Heredity is thus of less import than its effects. As a result, there is no attempt to study the causes of Selwyn's appearance, affectation, or depravity.

Selwyn's genealogy is further obscured by Mario Praz's observation that a description of the poet Swinburne by Guy de Maupassant bears resemblance to Goncourt's description of Selwyn.[38] In addition, his friend Philippe Burty comments to Goncourt on 'ce lord que vous avez fait si compliqué, chevalier, et swinburnien'.[39] Other possible models for Selwyn are also identified by Praz, thanks to clues found in the Goncourt *Journal*. These include Baudelaire because of his hands (Oct. 1857, 1, p. 301), and Barbey d'Aurevilly (9 May 1875, 2, p. 645). Michel Caffier proposes Frédéric Henkey as a model.[40] Praz's proposal that Selwyn is a fusion of these people is reasonable enough, but perhaps denies the extent to which themes such as sadism, dandyism, and affectation in fashion were all-permeating in literary circles of the Romantic, Naturalist and Decadent period, and were simply exploited to differing ends. Habits or proclivities that seem idiosyncratic may in fact be representative of the archetypal 'Decadent' man or the archetypal 'dandy'. On the other hand, the depraved characteristics of Selwyn are emphasised in the text, and it would be difficult, possibly even unjust, to ascribe these characteristics to all dandies. The force of place given to Selwyn's disquieting habits promotes a Decadent aesthetic of decay. Depravity is a means of confounding nature: Selwyn takes pleasure in his conditions, one of which is the urge to destroy objects of aesthetic and monetary value. Élisa, oddly, suffers from a similar disorder: 'il lui venait aux doigts une maladresse qui lui faisait tomber fréquemment les objets des mains' (p. 170), and this is also, of course, famously the case in *Nana*. Juliette, on the other hand, merely lives

[38] *The Romantic Agony*, pp. 418-419.
[39] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22455, fols 442-3.
[40] *Les Frères Goncourt: un déshabillé de l'âme* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1994), p. 243. See also *Journal*, 7 April 1862, 1, pp. 797-800.

amongst 'des choses d'un grand prix, mêlées à des objets de deux sous' (p. 8). A doctor, the reader is told, is studying Selwyn's curious condition for a book on '*Troubles nerveux*' (p. 275). As to Praz's dismissal of Edmond de Goncourt's belief that a new school would be born of *La Faustin* (*Journal*, 8 Feb. 1882, 2, p. 923) as megalomania, it is too perfunctory by half. This is especially true given that Praz goes on to explore the links between Goncourt's fictional Selwyn and other fictional sadists of the *fin-de-siècle*, as well as between Goncourt's novel and the novels of Huysmans and D'Annunzio. Moreover, Praz concludes that of the three models for *fin-de-siècle* sadists identified by him, one is Swinburne, one is Goncourt's Selwyn, and one is the Englishman described in the Goncourt *Journal*. The influence of the novel at the time was thus considerable, as Praz himself proves.

While there is no Naturalist scientific or medical explanation of Juliette's split personality, nor of Selwyn's degradation, there is evidence that Annandale's malady was researched by Goncourt. The general condition that plagues Juliette, and by extension all actresses, is not defined in medical terms and has little basis in science (nineteenth- or twenty-first century). The so-called 'agonie sardonique' (p. 304) that eats away at William Rayne, on the other hand, is researched by a correspondent who writes on headed paper from the 'École des hautes-études, laboratoire d'anatomie comparée et d'histoire zoologique'.[41] The writer, Ponchet (the same man who helped with monkeys for *Manette Salomon*, as mentioned in chapter 3 A, p. 87), provides ample information on the conditions 'le rire sardonique', 'le grand zygomatique' and 'le Risorius' in his second letter, but he reports in the first that he has found no trace of 'agonie sardonique' in the four medical dictionaries consulted (he refers Goncourt to these volumes for further information).[42] This does not prevent the term being used in the novel, however, which demonstrates that documentation is only useful in as much as it corroborates a preconceived idea and fits into a given aesthetic. A clue

[41] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22473 fol. 176, fols 178-9.
[42] The 'rire sardonique' is first mentioned in the *Journal* on 14 May 1871, 2, p. 436, in a passage relating an encounter between Rachel and Paul de Saint-Victor.

as to where the term 'agonie sardonique' comes from is given in the novel itself when the doctor explains the rarity of the disease to the actress:

> Voyez-vous, madame, les jeux bizarres du muscle risorius et du grand zygomatique?... un cas qui n'a jamais été observé scientifiquement... Les livres de médecine allemands, anglais, français, la nomment cette agonie... et vraiment la nomment-ils?... mais aucun livre d'aucun pays ne la décrit... et nous n'avions la certitude de son existence que par la mention qu'en fait, d'après le récit de Tronchin, Mme d'Epinay, une de vos compatriotes qui a laissé des Mémoires dans le siècle dernier (p. 304).

Once again the novel reaches into the eighteenth century - meanwhile, 'le siècle dernier' confirms that the novel takes place in the nineteenth century - for inspiration, with the added fact that it here makes reference to its own sources.

The physical manifestations of 'le grand zygomatique' and 'le Risorius' are both described by Ponchet and there are affinities between his text and the description of Annandale in the final chapter of *La Faustin*. Lips are slightly curved and 'exprime complètement la joie... depuis le simple sourire jusqu'en rire le plus fou. Il ne rend aucune autre expression...'.[43] Another source quoted by Ponchet concludes that 'la joie exprimée par le grand zygomatique paraît fausse'.[44] The account of the sinister laugh is different in tone in the novel, and focuses more closely on death and morbidity:

> Car ce n'était plus le sourire informulé et contestable du commencement. C'était, cette fois, bien le rire, oui un rire montant et descendant en même temps que le râle dans une gorge, un rire retroussant d'une manière atrocement ironique des lèvres violacées, un rire courant dans le sinistre *rictus* des dernières convulsions de la vie sur une face humaine, un rire - le rire, cette si douce enseigne, sur un visage, du bonheur et de la joie -, devenu une sorte d'épouvantable caricature satanique... (pp. 305-6).

[43] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22473 fol. 178.
[44] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22743 fols 178v-179.

Whereas in the letter the 'joie' is false, in *La Faustin* this falseness is so extreme as to be a satanic caricature. This satanic laugh appears earlier in the century as well. Baudelaire, in 'De l'essence du rire', discusses the condition with regard to the Irish novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Of Melmoth he writes: 'Il est [...] la résultante nécessaire de sa double nature contradictoire, qui est infiniment grande relativement à l'homme, infiniment vile et basse relativement au Vrai et au Juste absolus... ses organes ne supportent plus sa pensée'.[45] More important is the comparison with Emma Bovary's laugh in her last moments, recounted in chapter eight of the third section of *Madame Bovary*. There could also be another reference to *Lucia di Lammermoor*, in which Lucia goes mad thinking that she has been spurned by her Scottish baronial lover. In *La Faustin*, however, the spurning is presented from the lover's perspective.

The information available concerning the genesis of these three main characters poses problems of dating and setting. It is also much more ambiguous than the information pertaining to secondary characters. Edmond de Goncourt notes details of several lesser characters in his *Journal*. On 3 February 1881, he reveals the source of La Faustin's lover Blancheron, stating that the name is drawn from an eighteenth-century source (an 'agent de change' tells him that there is a nineteenth-century Blancheron as well; 2, pp. 885-6). The philosopher who sits beside the actress at dinner on the night of her première is mentioned on 26 April 1881 (2, p. 892) and other inspirations are revealed on 28 October (2, pp. 909-10) of the same year.[46] This creative process is also encountered in *Chérie*, where secondary characters are born out of scraps from the *Journal*, whereas the main character has much more elaborate and convoluted origins that play on Decadent themes while drawing on Naturalist creative processes.

---

[45] 'De l'essence du rire' in *Critique d'art, suivi de critique musicale*, ed. by Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp. 185-203 (p. 191).
[46] See *Les Frères Goncourt: un déshabillé de l'âme*, pp. 241-3 for additional sources.

La Faustin draws extensively on Goncourt's prior knowledge of the world of theatre, both eighteenth and nineteenth century. Empirical documents, together with the author's own memories and anecdotes about his friends, contribute to a blurring of the meaning of research 'pris sur le vif' and attest to the association between literature and history that is brought to the forefront in the role of documents in *Chérie*. More importantly, in the use of documentation in *La Faustin*, the drift toward Decadence is conspicuous. The overlap between Naturalist and Decadent themes is all pervasive. Decadence borrows from Naturalism its obsession with heredity - this can be seen in *La Faustin* just as it can in *À Rebours* - but Naturalism uses heredity as a starting point, a factor in the general decline of civilisation, rather than as an end in its own right.

Chapter 3D
Document Humain
Female Documents in *Chérie*

The role of human 'documents' in Edmond de Goncourt's novels is nowhere as marked as in this, his final novel, the composition of which mirrors historical writing. *Chérie* has been said by one critic to be a 'juxtaposition de documents réels'[1] and by another to be fabricated 'par simple 'collage' des documents fournis par les lectrices'.[2] Marcel Sauvage calls *Chérie* 'une suite de confidences féminines, transposées pour une monographie'.[3] All of these appraisals emphasise the place of empirical documents in the text, but it is not in and of itself remarkable that a dialogue between author and reader should take place. In the nineteenth century, many authors, including Flaubert and Balzac - who reportedly received over 12000 letters from the public - benefitted from correspondence-based relationships with their readers.[4] In 'Autour de *Chérie*', Philippe Hamon argues that epistolary exchanges are a theme in nineteenth-century literature.[5] What is remarkable is that by going directly to his readers, by urging them to send him their childhood confessions so that he might use them in his next project, a novel about the 'jeune fille moderne', later entitled *Chérie*, Goncourt undermined traditional conceptions of authorship: he established that his text was what in modern critical terms is called a 'hypertext', a text derived from anterior texts.[6] The question of which anterior texts (or 'hypotexts',

---

[1] Marie-Claude Bayle, *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1983), p. 6.
[2] Philippe Hamon, 'Autour de *Chérie*' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 275-85 (p. 281).
[3] *Jules et Edmond de Goncourt: précurseurs* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1970), p. 135.
[4] Christiane Mounoud-Anglés, *Balzac et ses lectrices: l'affaire du courier des lectrices de Balzac. Auteur/lecteur: l'invention réciproque* (Paris: Indigo & Côté-Femmes, 1994), p. 21.
[5] 'Qu'elle soit documentaire ou desintéressée, qu'elle soit sollicitée (comme le fait Edmond ici; mais Stendhal et Flaubert la pratiquaient aussi auprès de lectrices privilégiées) ou spontanée, qu'elle soit anonyme ou signée, la correspondance (voire la rencontre effective) entre la femme-lectrice et l'écrivain (célèbre) semble bien être une réalité et un quasi-thème romanesque au XIXe siècle'. 'Autour de *Chérie*', p.281.
[6] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1982), p. 13.

as Genette calls them) were used remains, to some extent, a mystery, for neither the carnet nor the manuscript of the novel are available for consultation by scholars.[7]

Goncourt's call was designed to solicit anonymous contributions - as a means of guaranteeing objectivity and *vraisemblance* - but the documents that eventually make their way into the novel all emanate from readers who are in some way connected to the author. The information provided by these women - both as noted down by Goncourt and by the women themselves - will be the focus of this chapter which will seek to analyse the intertextual process that leads from the confessions to the final text. The relationship between female documents and the final text is not simply intertextual, but at times an example of palimpsest. This is illustrated not only with regard to the letters, but also in a less obvious form of borrowing: Goncourt's adaptation of Julia Daudet's published memoir, *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne*. In the process of appropriating this source text for his novel, Goncourt gives it a distinctly Decadent slant.

While the method of acquiring documentation for *Chérie* may be novel, the use of documents to write fiction conforms to Realist and Naturalist patterns of literary creation. As was made clear in the opening chapter on the 'document humain', the Goncourt brothers liken the role of the novelist to the role of the historian, and famously brand the novel 'history that could have been'. There are similarities between the documentary formula described in the preface to *La Faustin* and the exposition of the ideal technique for historical research outlined in the prefaces to several of the Goncourt brothers' historical studies, notably *Portraits intimes du XVIIe siècle* (1856), *Sophie Arnould* (1857), *La Duchesse de Chateauroux* (1860),

[7] For suppositions on the whereabouts of the manuscripts and carnet of *Chérie*, see 'Miscellanées', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 6 (1998), 296-7. The notes and manuscript of *Chérie* are held in a private collection (Gimpel) and access to them was refused to Marie-Claude Bayle (see introduction and first chapter of *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt*).

and *Madame de Saint-Huberty* (1880).[8] The prefaces to each of these historical works emphasise the central role of private documents such as the 'lettre autographe' in bringing to life figures from history. A methodology similar to that expounded and employed in relation to historical works is put to use in *Chérie*, and this raises questions regarding the handling and treatment of sources and analysis in the novel. It is composed as if the main character were an historical, rather than an imaginary, figure.

Documents that are, essentially, impressions and memories of conversations and events that are inscribed or noted down in the Goncourt *Journal* are used primarily in the portrayal of secondary characters in *Chérie*. Those based on notes in the *Journal* are caricatures, akin to La Bruyère's characters, or images of a world that floats around Chérie (to make reference to another of Goncourt's passions, *japonaiseries*) without penetrating her being. In this respect, secondary characters fulfil a decorative function. The absence of a bond between the girl and the other characters is accentuated by the differences in their genesis. Few of the secondary characters are based on written documents provided by women readers. Put differently, historical antecedents or likenesses of characters such as Malvezin, the Maréchal Haudancourt and his secretary are found in the *Journal*. In contrast, details contributing to the main protagonist are drawn from the *Journal* as well as from reader contributions. This is accentuated by the fact that, as will be argued in chapter 4 C with respect to dialogue, there is very little interaction between secondary characters and Chérie. Chérie's entourage have little influence on her behaviour, they are rarely presented in action. The one person who does greatly influence the girl is 'la possédée, la détraquée, la toquée' (p. 221) Suzanne Malvezin. Malvezin is pushed toward 'l'excentrique, l'étrange, le malsain' (p. 221). She is never introduced directly to the reader, but she is interesting in her own right, as her debased nature springs from her

[8] Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Oeuvres complètes*, 21 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, 1986), XXXVIII-XXXIX, XLIV-XLV, X-XI, XXX-XXXI. The complete works include both original and subsequent prefaces.

belief, which echoes Taine, that there is 'ni bien ni mal, ni vice ni vertu' (pp. 221-2). She wears 'toilettes spectrales' and 'maquillages horrifiques' and pratices a 'religion *nevrosée*' (p. 222). Secondary characters are as two-dimensional as the heroine is multi-faceted, and rarely do the two meet.

The novel also makes use of documents that are furnished by readers, told in their own voices and recorded in their own hand. According to Bayle's analysis there are, the author's memories of his own family notwithstanding, four main contributors to *Chérie*. One of these is Mademoiselle Abbatucci, daughter of the French Minister of Finance (Chérie, by contrast, is granddaughter of the Minister of Justice). In the Goncourt *Journal*, there is frequent reference to stories of Mademoiselle Abbatucci's childhood (most importantly, that which is recounted on 30 Sept. 1878, 2, pp. 798-9). Abbatucci does not, however, appear to have provided any written sources herself. Julia Allard, otherwise known as Madame Alphonse Daudet, wrote under the pseudonym Karl Stenn for the *Journal Officiel*.[9] Early in their friendship, Goncourt suspected her of being a talented author in her own right, insinuating that she wrote for her husband: 'La femme [d'Alphonse Daudet] écrit et je la soupçonne d'être l'artiste du ménage' (*Journal*, 5 June 1874, 2, p. 579). Julia Daudet furnished her friend with details of her childhood and also published her own memoirs, *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne*, which, as its title suggests, deals with much the same subject matter as *Chérie*. This coincidence of subject matter - it is similar to Zola's *Joie de vivre* (1884) as well - is all important. Such were the similarities between certain themes of *La Joie de vivre* and *Chérie* that Edmond de Goncourt requested that passages of his novel be suppressed from serialisation.[10] More generally, it shows the

[9] Henceforth, Allard will be refered to as Julia Daudet. Unless otherwise stated, references to Daudet will refer to the author of *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne* and not her more prolific husband, Alphonse, nor her more political son, Léon. Michel Caffier makes reference to Daudet writing as Stenn in *Les Frères Goncourt: un déshabillé de l'âme* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1994), p. 213.

[10] 'Je retire à partir de la page 136, trois chapitres sur la formation de la jeune fille qui ont quelque parenté avec le roman de Zola [*Joie de vivre*], quoique écrits avant qu'il ait commencé son roman de la Joie de vivre...' (18 Feb. 1884). This wish was heeded. *Corres Huys-Gonc*, letter 12, 21 April 1884, pp. 76-8, note 2.

interest in the subject of young girls at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, Catherine Junges, Nikolai Tolstoy's cousin, wrote to Goncourt in response to the preface of *La Faustin*, though she had previously met Goncourt in 1878. The Russian aristocrat translated part of her childhood diary dealing with her first love so that Goncourt might use it as a 'document humain'. It describes the environment in which she was raised. Finally, Pauline Zeller, lady-in-waiting to Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, who allegedly hoped to marry Goncourt - Robert Ricatte refers to her as a 'tendre soupirante d'Edmond' - sent the author her 'cahier rouge' which details her first communion preparations.[11]

Noticeably absent from this roster of contributors is mention of anonymous letter-writers. In effect, it is unclear how many responses from 'ordinary' readers the author of *La Faustin* received to his 'call-to-pens'. Bayle believes that the presence of a cross drawn in red pencil on the letter from Junges proves that it was used as a source. However, there are numerous other letters in the correspondence which have these same red crosses, or which have red numbers written on them, and have nothing to do with *Chérie* or, indeed, any other Goncourtian novels.[12] Nor is there any incontrovertible evidence that the crosses are in Goncourt's hand. The fact that

---

[11] *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt 1851-1870* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), p. 164, note 35. To these names could be added several others. François Fosca mentions Line de Nittis and Léonide Leblanc in *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941), p. 336-7. Another critic examines the link between Chérie's life and diary and Marie Bashkirtseff's. See Peter Collister, 'Marie Bashkirtseff in Fiction: Edmond de Goncourt and Mrs Humphrey Ward', *Modern Philology*, 82 (1984-85), 53-69. Sonia Wilson believes Bashkirtseff's preface is a response to Goncourt. 'Making an Exhibition of Oneself in Public: Marie Bashkirtseff's *Journal intime*', *French Studies*, 55-4 (2001), 485-97. For the letter that Bashkirtseff wrote to Goncourt see *Correspondance Guy de Maupassant - Marie Bashkirtseff* (Arles: Actes sud, 2000). Ricatte and Yolaine de la Bigne identify Valtesse de la Bigne - 'la lionne' - as a model. *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 164, note 35; *Valtesse de la Bigne ou Le Pouvoir de la volupté* (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin, 1999), p. 166.

[12] A letter from Joseph Gayda of *Le Figaro* concerning Zola's *L'Oeuvre* has a red cross in pencil on the first page and the date 1885 written in red on the second (B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22463 fols 324-5). A 21 October 1878 letter from G. Gavi, on the other hand, has the number 114 in red pencil and relates to the novel *Les Frères Zemganno* (B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22464 fols 251-2). Several other letters in this volume have red markings, some of which indicate relevance to novels (fols 320-1 [red 136], fols 322-3 [red 149], fol. 324 [red 144]), others which have nothing to do with the creative process and documentation (fol. 303 [red X and //], fol. 319 [red 135]). See also B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22473 fols 10-11 which have red 54 and 53 respectively. Fol. 53 has the date 1881 on back in pencil. There are numerous other examples scattered throughout the correspondence. The pencil markings suggest some sort of preliminary classification or numbering of the letters.

Catherine Junges' letter is held in the general Goncourt correspondence at the Bibliothèque Nationale is also puzzling as it suggests that it is not in the 'notes préparatoires'. Nor do the letters from Daudet and Zeller have red pencil on them. In addition, there are three letters which were, for various reasons, not used in *Chérie*, but which were certainly sent to the author in response to the preface to *La Faustin*.[13] There is nothing to prove that any other letters exist.

Nonetheless, as Marie-Claude Bayle points out, there is enormous divergence of opinion among critics as regards the number of letters received and their relative usefulness.[14] Alidor Delzant's judgement that there was little correspondence of use - 'peu de femmes, à la vérité, répondirent utilement' - is most convincing due to his proximity to Goncourt.[15] Delzant was close to Goncourt and wrote the catalogue for the sale of his books in 1897.[16] Marcel Sauvage likewise believes that the author-reader collaboration was a failure. On the other hand, André Billy, the first biographer of the Goncourt brothers, notes that Rosny thought that Goncourt did use correspondence towards writing his ultimate novel, but does not specify to what extent. Lazare Prajs, ever a vehement critic of the Goncourts, states that many letters were received, though whether he concludes they were used to write the novel is less clear (it also suits his argument to present Edmond as unable to write a novel on his own). How opinion can be so varied about what is ostensibly quantifiable is an enigma hopefully resolved by the above overview. What is undeniable is that of the four main contributors mentioned above and by Bayle - Abbatucci, Zeller, Daudet, Junges - all were, at the very minimum, acquaintances of the author, and are

---

[13] Léonine Véri wrote to Goncourt on 4 June 1882 in order to recount a conversation had with her cousin, and promised to reveal her life story if only Goncourt replied. B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22477 fols 252-3. Anna Kroeker of Wiesbaden and Marie Durand of Vienna both wrote too late to be of any use to Goncourt, in May 1884 and 1885 respectively. B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22466 fol. 391 and B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22461 fols 138-9.

[14] For a summary of their opinions, see *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt*, p. 6.

[15] *Les Goncourt* (Paris: Charpentier, 1889), p. 237.

[16] Alidor Delzant, *Bibliothèque des Goncourt, livres modernes, vente à Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 5-10 avril 1897* (Paris: Imprimerie de Motteroz, n.d.).

therefore by no means the anonymous correspondents that Goncourt so gallantly courts in his preface.

The first example of the way in which a diary and letters are incorporated into the novel occurs in chapter thirty-three. In this chapter details of Chérie's first communion preparations are given in the so-called 'règlement de vie' (p. 114), which, according to Bayle and Ricatte, is drawn directly from Pauline Zeller's text.[17] However, it is difficult to assess the exact contribution of Zeller's 'règlement' to the novel as the only texts of hers available now for consultation are letters. Due to this fact, the comments here will be based on the conclusions of these two aforementioned critics. The novel as a whole charts the moral and physical growth of a child through to virtual adulthood, but there are remarkably few passages that approach the subject from the perspective of the protagonist herself. Chapter 33, however, does precisely this. It is here that Chérie states how she will act, as though she is giving instructions and rules of conduct not only to herself but to her director, not God but Goncourt, the narrator and author. She writes: 'Je ferai toujours' (p. 114), 'Je me mettrai au travail' (p. 116), 'J'honorerai la sainte Vierge d'une manière toute particulière' (p. 117), 'Ce que je crois' (p. 119). The heroine is heard in what is the longest chapter of the book and this gives an impression of intellectual lucidity not evidenced in the rest of the novel. Chérie quickly breaks the rules she sets out, however, and this undermines the authority of the 'règlement' as well as the intellectual integrity and honesty of her statements: they are shown to be fiction.

One side of Chérie's personality, the influence of religion, is explored in what Zeller – and Goncourt - term the 'règlement de vie'. The second example of private confessions used in the novel comes in the form of a letter from Catherine Junges. This focuses on matters of the heart rather than matters of the soul. Like in the case

[17] Zeller specifies in her accompanying letter to Goncourt that 'le règlement de vie se fait pendant la semaine de la Première Communion et l'on s'inspire des avis qui ont le plus vivement frappé pendant la retraite et les plus propres à aider à se corriger ses défauts.' B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22478 fol. 41.

of Zeller's 'règlement', parts of Junges' diary are reproduced in *Chérie,* where it is renamed a 'cahier de problèmes' (p. 185).[18] One critic, Marie-Claude Bayle, believes the 'cahier de problèmes' is drawn from Zeller's diary, or what Zeller calls her 'pauvre petit cahier rouge'.[19] Unfortunately, there are no traces of this diary, and the similarities between Junges' letters and translated diary and Goncourt's novel suggest an alternative interpretation. The 'cahier de problèmes' is another of the few occasions where the reader gains entry to the main character's mind. It is stipulated by the narrator that Chérie's diary is not only a palimpsest (two texts are written in the same school notebook), but written 'à contresens de l'écriture des devoirs' (p. 186). She is writing against the grain, subverting her 'devoirs'. The explanatory letter provided by Tolstoy's niece is condensed by Goncourt and details are used in the novel to describe Chérie's 'amourette', or what Junges calls 'l'histoire du premier amour d'une fillette'.[20] Junges' 'amourette' is for but one man, a certain Kostia, whereas Chérie, in the life of her journal, mentions at least five possible suitors by name (M.L., Ciel-Bleu, M. Henry, Charles Masselot, and Widerspach). Chérie goes so far as to declare herself 'amoureuse de trois cents jeunes gens' (p. 189), which is to say that she is enamoured of an entire society.

An example of Goncourt's reworking of Junges' diary occurs in chapter 56. In this chapter the protagonist is fifteen years old to Junges' sixteen, and though the style of the source diary and the fictional diary is contrasting, certain phrases remain virtually unchanged. If this were the sole example of reworking it could be ascribed to coincidence, but the passage from Junges is used elsewhere as well. While Junges writes on 6 June 'je suis si heureuse, si heureuse, je n'ai besoin de rien, de rien que de savoir qu'il est là, près de moi…', Chérie uses a similar formula, but is less certain of

[18] The episode is also recycled by Goncourt as 'Une passionnette de petite fille' in *La Revue indépendante*, 1 May 1884, pp. 5-8.
[19] 'Le chap. LVI […] est en grande partie la reproduction du Journal intime de Pauline Zeller', 'Le chap. LVI qui contient la copie presque intégrale du *Journal intime* de Pauline Zeller'. *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt*, pp. 24 and 58. B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22478 fol. 41.
[20] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22466 fol. 332.

her emotions: 'Je suis heureuse! De quoi? je n'en sais rien; je crois que c'est d'être jeune et jolie' (p. 186). Chérie's happiness stems from the external world of appearances while Junges' sentiment springs from private emotions. Junges writes on 12 April that her feelings are so powerful that 'tantôt j'ai comme une douleur, tantôt je suis gaie'. In contrast, the reader is led to believe that Chérie's fluctuating emotional state is caused by her desire to love, not by a love that exists, and this belies a conception of woman driven to love, and driven by a force that, if left unheeded, can be nothing if not malignant. She confesses:

> Samedi, 21. - Mon cœur déborde d'une affection que je voudrais répandre au dehors. J'éprouve un besoin d'aimer. Je voudrais un ami... Tantôt je suis triste à en pleurer, alors je me fourre dans un roman; tantôt je suis gaie et je bouscule tout le monde... (pp. 195-6).

This situation changes, for, by the end of the novel it transpires that the protagonist was withholding her feelings from her diary. What Junges states in her diary, Chérie hides from hers. Following the protagonist's premature death, the Maréchal Haudancourt, her grandfather, finds a note in which Chérie's intimate thoughts are revealed (chapter 97):

> Je suis heureuse, bien heureuse; je n'ai besoin de rien... que de savoir qu'il est là, où je suis. J'avais tant de choses à lui dire... mais je n'ai rien su lui dire de ce que j'aurais voulu... Ça n'a été ni gai, ni agréable, ce moment de causerie avec lui... C'était comme si je ne sentais plus rien, comme si je ne me rappelais plus rien!' (p. 308).

These words are almost exactly those written by Junges on 6 June and show a heroine not nearly as ordered and controlled as the 'règlement de vie' would have us believe. The cause of Chérie's mental decline into madness and physical decline to death pivots on the contents of this note which, chronologically, is discovered too late to influence the course of events which leads to her death. By noting these feelings outside her 'Cahier de Problèmes' and by not addressing them in her

'règlement de vie', the protagonist leaves them untainted by the petty concerns of the young society girl. The bubbling, spontaneous girl of the *Cahier* is not the 'real' Chérie but a *persona*, and the same is true of the pious girl of the 'règlement'. Chérie hides under the layers (sections may be more apt, as layers implies depth) of her personality.

On a more general level, the division (or separation) of Junges' journal into two parts – one of which forms the fictional journal, the other of which is a scrap of paper - shows clearly that source documents can be manipulated in order to paint a fictional substitute vision of 'reality'. Not even the main character thinks that diaries should contain all the 'truth'. This being the case, Chérie's concealment calls into question the very foundations of the novel, by calling into question the idea that the documents which contributed to the novel are worthy as 'objective' data. This jeopardises the historical truth of the novel (can novels really be written as would histories?) in addition to jeopardising the entire mimetic movement and the worthiness of historical projects. It leads to the conclusion that the interpretation of childhood expressed in *Chérie* is not based on the documentary evidence, rather the sources are used to support a predetermined vision of females and the documents are manipulated to fit with Goncourt's ends which posit that the female will hide her true self.

This conclusion, however, is challenged by a letter dated 26 May [1882?], from a doctor Magneau, to whom a doctor Parrot had forwarded Edmond's questions regarding the development of females during puberty.[21] Magneau writes:

> Je ne puis vous indiquer un ouvrage traitant spécialement des modifications physiologiques, intellectuelles et morales qui suivent le développement de la puberté. Je dois même dire qu'à l'état normal ces changements se produisent d'une manière beaucoup plus simple et plus calme qu'on ne se l'imagine dans

[21] Doctor Parrot states in his letter that he has written to his friend with Edmond's questions (B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22471 fol. 292).

> le public; les grandes perturbations quand elles se produisent, ont habituellement pour [jour] un état maladif. Toutefois, [Mr.] le littérateur trouvera quelques renseignements utiles dans la physiologie des passions du Dr. Ch. Letourneau, 2e édition, chez Reinvali, et dans la Sociologie d'après l'éthnologie du meme [sic] auteur, puis encore dans le traité des faculté de l'ame [sic] d'Adolphe Garnier (1e volume) mais ce dernier ouvrage effleure simplement la question... Dans le cas où ce Monsieur voudrait faire quelques incursions sur le domaine pathologique je me mets volontiers à sa disposition.[22]

Chérie's nervous condition is, in fact, based on a process of documentation. What documentation such as Magneau's indicates is that she is not a 'typical' adolescent, rather she suffers from so-called 'grandes perturbations' which arise in extreme circumstances, in Goncourt's novel, when biological instincts are not obeyed. There is also an auto-textual link to *Renée Mauperin* (1864). Where virginal heroines normally die of consumption, Chérie morbidly relishes her decline. There is only one other character in the novel who flaunts sickliness and she too is unmarried and highly eccentric. Chérie's childhood acquaintances, as married adults, distance themselves from Chérie because of her pathological illness. Though the documentation from Magneau and Parrot offers some justification for Chérie's illness, the illness is nonetheless based on an almost Darwinian conception of the female species as ruled by her reproductive system. As Bayle points out, there are countless reasons for Chérie to die that have nothing to do with a biological or scientific framework.[23] The heroine becomes her illness: it penetrates all aspects of her life.

The 'règlement de vie' and the 'cahier de problèmes' are both supposed to be written by the protagonist. In reality, however, evidence suggests that the documents come from two different sources and do not share an author. This is quite unusual in Goncourtian fiction, for most pre-1870 Goncourtian characters are based on specific

[22] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22471 fols 293-4.
[23] 'La question des tares héréditaires, bien que certainement importante, nous semble, ici, seulement un prétexte'. *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt*, p. 30.

individuals, more often than not a member of the author's family or intimate circle. Chérie is not: she has several authors, none of whom is a relation of her creator. As such, the construction of *Chérie* suggests that if there is no one definitive author, there can be no unified character. The author is transformed into more of a 'bricoleur' (as Lévi-Strauss in *La Pensée sauvage*, and later Genette and Foucault posit the term), someone who constructs novels – not unthinkingly - out of the pieces of material available to him. All of this means that the novel contributes, wittingly or unwittingly, to the demise of a notion of authorship which posits the author as an authority. Genette writes:

> Le propre du bricoleur est en effet d'exercer son activité à partir d'ensembles instrumentaux qui n'ont pas été, comme ceux de l'ingénieur, par exemple, constitués en vue de cette activité. La règle du bricolage est "de toujours s'arranger avec les moyens du bord" et d'investir dans une structure nouvelle des résidus désaffectés de structures anciennes, faisant l'économie d'une fabrication expresse au prix d'une double opération d'analyse (extraire divers éléments de divers ensembles constitués) et de synthèse (constituer à partir de ces éléments hétérogènes un nouvel ensemble dans lequel, à la limite, aucun des éléments réemployés ne retrouvera sa fonction d'origine).[24]

Whereas Lévi-Strauss compares the task of the 'bricoleur' to a process of myth creation, Genette applies the idea of 'bricolage' to the literary critic; but, it also applies to the present novelistic case in as much as neither the letters nor Julia Daudet's volume of 'souvenirs' would have been intended to be included in a work of fiction. It is less sure whether the novel of 'pure analysis' - that is to say the plot-free novel - can be likened to literary criticism and called a metalanguage, for *Chérie* is not about the documents it incorporates, it is the result of the fusion of these documents. That the author is in one way or another a 'bricoleur' is all the more true given that the reading public knows that the author/prefacer asked his 'lectrices' (*La Faustin*, p. 2) to contribute to the novel. By proceeding in this fashion Edmond de Goncourt is going much further than simply renewing literature and bringing the

[24] Gérard Genette, 'Structuralisme et critique littéraire' in *Figures I* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1966), p. 145. See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), pp. 26-33.

novel to its obvious conclusion (according to the preface), he is undermining his own authority. Whether Goncourt would accept this interpretation or whether he was aware of his preconceptions is open to debate. Nevertheless, the issue of 'bricolage' can be linked to the earlier argument that antecedents and causality seem to have weakened roles in the Decadent novel. Narratives fall together, things fall into place, rather than being explained by a simple filiation; the text presents itself as a collage.

While Zeller and Junges are quoted in the novel, their discourses are not altogether harmoniously blended. Jean Levallois, a contemporary of Goncourt's, addresses the problem posed by the sources in his 1884 review of the novel. He interpreted the use of documents in the following way:

> D'après son propre témoignage, il [Goncourt] a réuni sur ce sujet une foule d'observations, une vaste collection de documents humains. Mais évidemment, lorsqu'il s'est agi de fondre tous ces documents, d'harmoniser toutes ces observations, l'artiste n'a plus su qu'en faire ni comment s'y prendre.[25]

Levallois presents this lack of harmony – or the obvious presence of other voices which are not the narrator's - as a failure on the part of the author. It is arguable, however, that lack of harmony instead shows the extreme modernity of both the subject matter of the novel and its composition and narration. Documents were solicited from readers with the explicit intention of using them in a novel. Rather than being reduced to a single discourse (the narrator's discourse) these documents coexist in the text as fragments of women's voices. At the same time, the interventions of the narrator (coupled with references to the creative process such as 'des lettres de mères qui me sont adressées' [p. 133] - the only mother to write in that capacity and whose letters are in the Goncourt correspondence is Daudet) combined with the somewhat dated and misogynist conception of the female and the feminine, restricts the plurality of voices from fulfilling their expression. In terms of the

[25] 'Causerie Littéraire', *Le Télégraphe*, 28 April 1884.

contemporary literary field, the way in which the documents are manipulated suggests that the dominant Naturalist discourse of types is disintegrating because the female contributors cannot be reduced to a type. The paradox is that the documents all the while buttress a not impartial *fin-de-siècle* substitute discourse based on Chérie's eccentricity, virginity, and malignant biology. Chérie dies for want of a husband; love, for her, is an instinct that must be satisfied. The malevolence of the female body is itself a terribly Decadent supposition, intimately linked to the physiological need to reproduce. Jean Pierrot speaks of the 'pitiless necessities of a physical, physiological and social determinism that holds man in thrall to the laws of heredity' and sees love in the Decadent imagination as 'merely an unconscious subjection to an instinct aimed solely at the survival of the species'.[26] Chérie rejects the prerogatives of the survival of the species when she announces to her grandfather, like Renée Mauperin before her, that she will not marry: 'Je ne veux pas me marier' (p. 235).

The multiple documentary sources suggest that the novel intends to present a hereditary type by seeking common ground between the women's contributions. However, in the text, type is opposed to individual. This is made explicit when Chérie's uniqueness and universality is affirmed by the following two contradictory statements: firstly, in chapter 60, 'Chérie était la femme qui n'est jamais tout le monde, Chérie était l'être rare' (p. 204). Secondly, in the very next chapter: 'Chérie était semblable à toutes les jeunes filles de seize ans' (p. 206). Chérie is both type and individual, or more precisely, individual turned type. The 'individual' source texts are appropriated to fit with Goncourt's general vision of women as fatal. Moreover, this generalising vision is based on a conception of types, even stereotypes, but the examples used to present the generalising vision are remarkably individual. All in all, there are grounds for asserting that the play between hypertext and hypotext, between

[26] *The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900*, trans. by Derek Coltman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 10.

source and product, between type and individual, between a dominant Naturalist discourse and the discordant voices of the *fin-de-siècle* protagonist, and the lack of traditional 'plot' (there are very few events in *Chérie*, much less a climax) is highly Decadent. Considered as a history of the 'jeune fille', Chérie is highly contentious. The documentary process cannot be pinpointed: there is no one model for the main character and there is no way of authenticating assertions. This destabilises the text and calls into question the role of the 'document humain' as both source for, and product of, a certain type of literary creation based on mimetic representation. The disjointed nature of *Chérie* as a history means that external sources no longer need to be referred to in order to demonstrate the heteroclite nature of the text. Indeed, the disjunction of the text is both internal and external. Where before the identification of documents and models was alleged to contribute to the interpretation of a text, *Chérie* illustrates that a text based on empirical documents can be a place of disunity. The disjunction between the parts becomes an internal matter, and this foreshadows the modernity of Apollinaire and, later, cubists, who make extensive use of collage techniques.

The unpublished letters and diaries submitted by Zeller and Junges are used to give the protagonist her voice. The voices they provide are only expressed in the novel through the private writing of the heroine. Insofar as this is the case, the documents keep their original function. Female confessions remain female confessions, though they are spread across the novel and lose the cohesion given them by their original authors. There is, however, also a published work exploited in *Chérie*, and this document is deployed in a very different fashion to Zeller and Junges' diaries and letters. As was mentioned earlier, Julia Daudet's main contribution to the novel is her *L'Enfance d'une parisienne* (1883), part of which is dedicated to Goncourt.[27]

[27] The section comprising 'L'arbre de Judée', 'Les rondes', 'Vigneux', 'Saint-Pierre', and 'Départ' is dedicated to Goncourt. Goncourt thanks Daudet for the dedication in this letter: 'Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire, chère madame, combien je suis touché d'une dédicace qui fait mien et dans une aussi délicate prose, un peu de votre passé.' *Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 186, 18 August 1883, p. 127.

Fragments of *L'Enfance d'une parisienne* were published in the magazine *La Vie Moderne* in 1883, the year before *Chérie* was published, and the Alphonse Daudet-Edmond de Goncourt correspondence makes it clear that Goncourt had read these passages.[28] Not only did Goncourt read the passages, but he praises them in a letter to Julia Daudet: 'Chère Madame, Il faut en faire beaucoup comme cela de morceaux à *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne*, il faut en faire un gros, gros volume. Tout à fait charmant le morceau publié par *La Vie moderne* aujourd'hui' *(Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 171, 7 April 1883, p. 119).

Daudet's voice is appropriated in such a manner as to make the protagonist an expression of *fin-de-siècle* beliefs. Comparing passages from Daudet's and Goncourt's books will reveal how Goncourt's Decadent vision is mapped onto Julia Daudet's memoirs. Chapter 10 of *Chérie* describes the protagonist's love of dolls, and this same fondness is the focus of a chapter in Madame Daudet's work. In the original account Daudet explains that should dolls get wet, their paint runs, leaving a tear-like stain on their faces:

> Après j'en eus beaucoup d'autres, des poupées peintes qui perdaient leurs joues roses à la moindre goutte d'eau. Quels désespoirs! La poupée lavée, déteinte, et mes doigts rouges de ses fraîches couleurs... Une tâche blanche qui ressemblait à une larme mal essuyée la défigurait d'un côté; j'avais le cœur gros pour longtemps (p. 14).

The effect of water on dolls is taken up in Goncourt's novel in the context of a discussion of Chérie's passion for her second doll, Mlle Mastoc. The detail that Mlle Mastoc is the second doll is highly relevant. The reason for this is the demise of Chérie's first lifeless companion, who was left, literally, to rot:

> Malheureusement, un jour de distraction, elle [Chérie] l'oublia sur un banc du parc, il survint un orage dans la nuit et, quand elle la retrouva le matin, c'était

[28] 'La leçon de lecture', *La Vie moderne*, 17 June 1882; 'Le Mensonge', *La Vie moderne*, 24 March 1883; 'Départ', *La Vie moderne*, 7 April 1883; 'L'Enfance d'une Parisienne - fragments III', *La Vie moderne*, 19 May 1883.

> une bouillie, ses doigts enfonçaient dedans. Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire l'épouvantable désespoir qui suivit (p. 53).

This gruesome episode provides an all too material example of decomposition and differs significantly in focus from Madame Daudet's account of the meeting of water and dolls. In the original account sadness is expressed through first person narrative. Goncourt's heroine, on the other hand, does not express her feelings about the disintegration of her doll. Where Daudet reports her sentiments directly, in Goncourt's novel this task falls to the narrator rather than the character. Again, in contrast to Julia Daudet's young Parisian, Goncourt's fictional character has no voice and is unable to speak for herself except in private forums. Madame Daudet's knowledge and biography are needed to build the 1884 novel, but her voice is not. This goes some way to explaining the shift in emphasis from fingers reddened by the 'fraîches couleurs' of disfigured dolls to the Decadent vision of hands penetrating putrefied ones. It also illustrates how one document, in this case a published memoir, can be put to use in another, whose premise is vastly different. The effect of water on dolls is a sufficiently specific subject as to preclude any mere coincidence between the two episodes. For this reason it can be asserted that a 'thematic transformation',[29] to use Genette's term, of the source text has taken place. By altering Daudet's version of the story, the author is able to make it coincide with his more troubling and morbid conception of female childhood.

The thematic focus of the relation between child and doll presented in *Chérie* bears little relation to the way in which the subject is approached in *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne*. In the earlier text, tenderness dominates:

> D'ailleurs, je n'avais pas encore de coquetterie, seulement de tendresse inexpérimentée, un sentiment de l'abri, car mon plus grand plaisir était de coucher mon poupon dans sa bercette d'osier au risque de chiffoner les bonnets de dentelle avec tous leurs rubans (p. 15).

[29] *Palimpsestes*, p. 293.

Tenderness for Mlle Mastoc, who is, incidentally, 'un parfait échantillon de la mode de 1830' (p. 54) complete with *trousseau*, is taken to extremes by Goncourt's heroine. Unlike the young Julia Allard, Chérie has an ample amount of coquetterie as is evidenced by the following passage: 'Afin d'empêcher qu'elle attrapât froid la nuit, des plumes ramassées tous les jours dans le poulailler, Chérie lui fabriquaient de petits édredons bien chauds' (p. 54). Her imagination is far from stunted.

Goncourt's 1884 novel dwells on the role of the imagination in young girls and on the manner in which a girl is a 'victime volontaire d'une illusion tout à fait extraordinaire, et dans laquelle l'inanimé et la mort de ce qu'on touche [une poupée] n'a pas même le pouvoir de l'enlever à son hallucination maternelle' (p. 52). To state that a doll is inanimate is accurate and factual; to state that it is dead is not merely overstating the case, but a means of suggesting that the doll is a morbid object (and that playing with dolls is also morbid). This sentiment is also expressed in *La Fille Élisa*, where the heroine becomes stupidly absorbed looking at 'deux poupées macabres' (p. 68) in a shop window. The young Chérie is unable to differentiate between make-believe and reality and this deficiency is carried through to adulthood as she progressively transforms herself into a doll. Her heightened emotional awareness and her propensity to fictionalise herself are evidenced in the final events of the novel, where she listens rapturously - 'comme tirée hors d'elle-même par la musique d'amour' (p. 329) - to *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and places herself into the operatic drama.[30] The melting together of dream and reality in the doll passage reflects the way in which the tone and focus of the episode is changed from Daudet's version to Goncourt's. A Decadent imprint is left on Daudet's story. Dufief writes that 'les Décadents feront de l'activité onirique la principale occupation de personnages qui confondent souvent rêve et réalité' and Chérie here approaches this

[30] A letter from Lucien Faucou provides Goncourt with information on *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Italy and Paris. B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22462 fol. 52.

state.[31] The resonance between documentary sources and fiction exhibits this tension, both in the way that empirical documents are used to support fiction, thereby transforming fiction into reality and eliminating the boundary between the two poles, and in the way in which documents are subtly transformed to become part of an aesthetic of artifice. Although *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne* and *Chérie* share a common subject, Goncourt's interpretation of the bond between child and doll has a vastly different emphasis than Daudet's source work. The maternal instinct - which neither author questions - is presented as natural in *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne*. Goncourt's interpretation transforms maternity based in 'nature' into a conception of maternity as a natural, yet malevolent, instinct which tampers with woman's judgement and her ability to discern reality from fantasy. Chérie, for instance, falls prey to an 'ardente maternité' (p. 54) for Mlle Mastoc. The biological is, under Goncourt's pen, grotesque. Daudet's souvenirs are deformed to support a *fin-de-siècle* discourse which posits woman as undeniably (perhaps irretrievably) disturbed.

The description of dolls is interesting for another reason, as well: combined with these memories of Daudet's (memories which were general in nature and which rarely refer to specific events as Goncourt's fiction does) are details drawn from the *Journal*. In this same chapter, Chérie baptises Mlle Mastoc, and Goncourt himself participated in a similar event (*Journal*, 27 June 1865, 1, pp. 1171-2).[32] The chapter thus illustrates how specific aspects of Chérie's life are pieced together from varying sources. However, awareness of the constituent parts in a sense dismembers the protagonist. Robert Ricatte writes in his study on the two Goncourt brothers that they require 'un répondant authentique pour tous leurs personnages'.[33] Chérie, however, has several 'répondants'. And while Enzo Caramaschi did not make the following remarks with *Chérie* in mind, they are nonetheless pertinent to the present discussion: 'les Goncourt s'insurgent contre la simplicité et le caractère homogène du

[31] 'Les Goncourt précurseurs de la décadence', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 13-22 (p. 18).
[32] See also *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt*, p. 35.
[33] *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 455.

personnage traditionnel'.[34] Edmond de Goncourt's *Chérie* does precisely this: it is, as intimated earlier with respect to the 'cahier de problèmes' and the 'règlement de vie', a revocation and repudiation of the homogeneous nature of his previous characters and their stories, who are based on single figures.

In another episode, Julia Daudet recalls fondly the property, called Vigneux, where much of her childhood was spent. In this many-roomed abode, children get lost amidst the closed doors and endless corridors, and only enter certain rooms in their nightmares. It is clear from an 1882 letter that Daudet broached this subject with Goncourt. It is also clear from this note that the two authors had been discussing, if not the subject of both their texts, then at least the subject of Goncourt's. She reflects: 'Je pensais à ce que vous me disiez des peurs des enfants, avez[-]vous remarqué la terreur que leur laisse un rêve, et leur facilité à retomber dans le même rêve effrayant.'[35] She proceeds to cite her son Lucien as an example of this (though there is no sign of this boy, or indeed of any 'troubled' boy, in Goncourt's novel). Daudet's own fearful and pseudo-Gothic dreams are recalled in her memoirs, where it is written:

> Nous n'entrions pas, mais, la nuit, l'impression ressentie revenait avec toutes sortes de terreurs; nous étions enfermés là, sans trouver d'issue, criant de détresse et livrés à cet inconnu que recèlent les vieilles pierres (pp. 102-3).
>
> Nos rêves à nous, erraient par cette maison trop grande qui donnait de l'espace à nos imaginations enfantines, les surexcitait, à toute heure, de recherche et de mystère (p. 103).

Environment exerts enormous influence on mental state according to this interpretation of fear, and that the imaginary takes precedence in the child's mind is something that Goncourt would not refute. In *Chérie*, Daudet's fearful dreams are distorted into nightmarish reality, and a group of young girls fall prey to their own

[34] *Réalisme et impressionnisme dans l'oeuvre des Goncourt* (Pisa: Editrice Libreria Goliardica, 1971), p. 70.
[35] B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22459 fol. 40.

acute imaginations. In Daudet's scenario, the victims call for help, in Goncourt's they lose the power of speech. The only way the virtually mute children can escape their own fears is by relying on superstition. The following passage, which begins quite dramatically, takes place as Chérie and her playmates explore the uninhabited upper rooms of 'le Muguet', the family house in Lorraine:

> Un coup de vent fermait la porte de la chambre où le petit monde venait de se faufiler, et pas une des petites filles, même en se haussant sur la pointe des pieds, n'était assez grande pour atteindre la serrure. Un premier moment de stupéfaction suivi d'une angoisse inexprimable, dans laquelle ces enfants avaient la terreur qu'on ne découvrit [sic] pas où elles se trouvaient, et qu'elles restassent indéfiniment enfermées. Elles se voyaient, les pauvres petites, passer toute la soirée sans dîner, et peut-être encore coucher au milieu de ces vieilles choses commençant à leur faire peur, si peur qu'aucune ne se sentait assez brave pour appeler: parlant tout bas, comme si elles redoutaient le bruit de leurs paroles. Enfin l'une d'elles, à qui Mascaro avait donné un lapereau de garenne[...] et qui le portait dans une petite caisse sous son bras, s'imagina de monter dessus, et au bout d'efforts infinis, et en s'y reprenant à plus de dix fois - la serrure était un peu détraquée, - elle arriva [...] à tirer le bouton de coulisse (p. 74-5).

There is no question that the episodes are comparable, and they illustrate the manner in which Julia Daudet's sympathetic evocation of the past is overturned in favour of a far more disturbing and unnerving reading of female childhood where subconscious impulses reign supreme. What was in Daudet's account a dream is in Goncourt's account a frightening reality. Unlike the epistolary documents, Julia Daudet's souvenirs are reworked so that they become almost Decadent where before they were banal. Daudet's dreams become the reality of Goncourt's characters.

The environment changes from one account to the other, as well. The clash of writings - Daudet's and Goncourt's - is furthered in chapter 12 of the novel. Julia Daudet recalls with affection a childhood friend and neighbour :'ce voisin de notre âge habitant une maison de garde au bout du mur de la propriété. (p. 110) Chérie also has a country companion, Mascaro, who is described as a 'garçonnet' (p. 52) and is

much more remarkable than Daudet's friend who appropriates 'la nature et se distr[ait] des saisons' (p. 109):

> Ce bizarre amoureux de la nature [Mascaro] avait refusé de prendre une chambre aux communs du château, et s'était établi au fond du parc dans une ancienne loge de portier en ruine, près d'une porte abandonnée, où il vivait dans la société de toutes sortes d'animaux difformes (p. 61).

This passage evokes an eccentric living in the midst of a Lorraine equivalent to Brocéliande. His liberty is in contrast to others in the novel who are prisoners of their worlds: Chérie's mother is guarded within a walled compound in the park of Le Muguet, Chérie is a prisoner of her society. The list of animals which follows, animals which strike curious and almost fantastic poses, is also found in the *Journal*, where they are attributed to Mlle Abbatucci. Bayle has remarked on how the passage is transposed into the novel: 'L'auteur a utilisé à peu près telle quelle cette note dans le roman, en ajoutant toutefois 'une corne' au chat comme si ces animaux n'étaient pas déjà assez extraordinaires.'[36]

This transposition raises questions of authorship. Sabatier believes that the *Journal* and its contents constitute 'la reproduction de la réalité dans son authenticité même', but this is perhaps a bit facile. [37] Whose words is the reader reading or hearing? What part does literary creation play in the recording of this incident? What is the role of orality in intertext? Does the author need Abbatucci's voice in a way in which he does not need Madame Daudet's? Is the written more sacred than the spoken? Or

---

[36] *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt*, p. 34. The *Journal* describes the animals in the following fashion: 'il y avait un mouflon qui, après s'être consulté un moment des yeux avec deux chiens, partait à la chasse en leur compagnie. A cette chasse, quelquefois, un de ces deux emportait par la peau du cou, dans sa gueule, un certain chat de la maison qui, après s'être rebiffé et avoir juré comme le diable, faisait gaiement sa partie. Il existait aussi un canard qui avait des accès d'épilepsie, pendant lesquels il tombait sur le dos sans pouvoir se relever. Il poussait alors des cacardements féroces, jusqu'à ce qu'un des chiens le remît sur ses pattes d'un coup de nez' (15 Sept. 1882, 2, p. 957). The novel describes them as such: 'un mouflon borgne, deux chiens galeux, un chat porteur d'une corne entre les oreilles, un canard attaqué d'une maladie qui, de temps en temps, le faisait tomber sur le dos sans pouvoir se relever sur ses pattes' and so on (pp. 61-2).

[37] *L'Esthétique des Goncourt* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970), p. 514.

vice-versa? Was Goncourt thinking of his novel when the detail was confided to the *Journal*? Was the account embellished in 1882 before being embellished in 1884? Unfortunately, these queries must remain rhetorical. However, what the composition or construction of *Chérie* reveals is that there can be no one, definite and definitive author, as there can be no unified character and documents can be used to any end, not necessarily one that explains an environment or society.

In 1889 Alidor Delzant, one of the earliest critics to study the Goncourt brothers, offered the following insight into reader contributions to *Chérie*:

> Peu de femmes, à la vérité, répondirent utilement à l'appel qui leur était adressé. Les lettres envoyées contenaient surtout le récit d'aventures bizarres ou romanesques dont l'auteur avait pris soin qu'il n'avait que faire. Avait-il beaucoup compté, du reste, sur des confidences lumineuses?[38]

Whether or not Goncourt counted on receiving many useful letters, it is certain that the documents – letters and book - from Zeller, Junges and Daudet served him well. What is less clear is whether these confessions actually enlightened the author. Based on the comparisons made here, it seems more accurate to conclude that the documents were used to confirm a pre-established vision of woman as doomed by biology and unable to come to terms with her own passions, instincts and voices. This very Decadent theme contrasts with the very modern literary techniques that contribute to this novel. The vision of woman is related to the Decadent movement which emerged in the 1880s, when *Chérie* was written. Ultimately, the contextual change establishes an aura of decomposition which manifests itself in the main character's non-homogeneous identity and deteriorating health. On a more general level, because no one voice is definitive, the incorporation of so-called objective and factual documents into the text challenges both notions of textual authority and the

[38] *Les Goncourt*, p. 239.

validity of the pseudo-scientific bases of the Naturalist novel as well as the pseudo-historical aims of the mimetic novel.

Chapter 4A
Language
What is Écriture Artiste?

According to the Goncourtian aesthetic doctrine as expounded in the preface to the 1865 novel *Germinie Lacerteux*, there are two main focal points in the novel: documentation and style. The Goncourts were not the only authors to stress this dichotomy. Émile Zola formulates it in two separate essays where the topics 'L'Expression personnelle' and 'Le Sens du réel' are each addressed, thus showing to what extent the concepts were central to the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. To analyse the novels of the Goncourts - joint or solo - in terms of style entails an exploration of what the authors referred to as 'écriture artiste'. 'Écriture artiste' is a highly personalised style, verging on the mannerist, evolved by the Goncourts to present a so-called objective scientific truth. Like the impressionist painters of the nineteenth century who, to a large extent, neglect or reject the moralising narrative function of art in favour of perception and immediacy, 'écriture artiste' draws attention not so much to the object being described as to the manner in which light, time and space affect sensory perception of an object. Its focus is on surfaces. This 'impresionnisme modernement suggestif', as Jean Moréas refers to it in 'Le Symbolisme, un manifeste littéraire', is primarily interested in sensation and the sensual.[1]

A characteristic trait of 'écriture artiste' is its treatment of temporality. Philippe Desan, in his introduction to *Germinie Lacerteux*, for example, speaks of the distinctiveness of its temporal focus: 'les Goncourt ne s'intéressent guère au mouvement et au temps. La problématique de leur roman se situe ailleurs. Les descriptions de l'instant présent, pris sur le vif, sont le véritable objet de leur

[1] *Les Premières armes du symbolisme*, ed. by Michael Pakenham (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1973), p. 36.

experimentation romanesque'.[2] 'Écriture artiste' draws on nominal syntax and sometimes precious language to create literary tableaux. The desire of the authors to portray modern life in subject matter is reinforced in the novel by stylistically emphasising the moment the object is supposedly perceived by the narrator (writing and seeing are presented as simultaneous or contemporaneous). Philip Stephan refers to this as 'the rendering of physical sensation' and Patrick O'Donovan's suggestion that 'écriture artiste' closes down the distance between perception and expression, affirms this coincidence of acts.[3] Nevertheless, the notion of perception in this context is highly complicated, problematic even, as the object being perceived and described is not real, it is often a creation of the author's imagination.

A consequence of the blending of visual perception and the act of literary creation is that the Goncourtian text is based in the individual (the narrator) who perceives actions or objects artistically and presents them as though they were pieces of art (thus, landscapes can be described as would be paintings). The author does not hide behind his text. Because of the individuality of 'écriture artiste', the force of naturalist typology is undermined. While, for instance, the heroines Germinie Lacerteux or Renée Mauperin could be interpreted as composite beings reflecting pre-determined social types (the servant and the bourgeoise), the language used to describe them is filtered through an individual perception that is perceiving at a particular moment in time. It is not textbook language that describes the type objectively or scientifically, nor is it realistic in the much more impersonal sense that Champfleury gives the term, positing that all fiction and decoration should be shunned in favour of 'reality'.[4] Instead, so-called types are presented in all their momentary specificity and in all their temporality. This has led Jeremy Wallace, who has compared the Goncourts

---

[2] Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Germinie Lacerteux*, ed. by Philippe Desan (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990), p. xxix.
[3] Philip Stephan, *Paul Verlaine and the Decadence 1882-1890* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), p. 13; Patrick O'Donovan, 'De l'écriture au texte dans les romans des Goncourt', *Francofonia*, 20 (Spring 1991), 85-103 (p. 91).
[4] *Le Réalisme*, ed. by G. and J. Lacambre (Paris: Hermann, 1973).

and La Bruyère, to state that 'l'écriture artiste cherche avant tout à traduire les sensations fugaces et à les figer dans le temps'.[5] The fixity evoked by Wallace, as will be shown in chapter 4 B, has a large part to play in the stasis present in Edmond de Goncourt's novels. There is not enough space here to analyse and compare the collective works of the Goncourts from a stylistic point of view. Suffice it to say that in post-1870 novels 'écriture artiste' is indissociable from the mediation between Naturalism and Decadence.

The fact that in Goncourtian realism, the seeing 'eye' and writing 'I' coincide has prompted Italian scholar Enzo Caramaschi to refer to the two brothers as Impressionists.

> Dans l'univers des Goncourt, l'objet – être ou chose – compte pour ce qu'il dit – et dans la mesure où il parle – à un oeil de peintre ou à une âme de poète: c'est donc le sujet qui fait le accéder à l'existence. Être, pour les choses, c'est provoquer des impressions; vivre, pour un objet, c'est affecter le sujet: à ce réalisme subjectif et artiste quel autre nom pourrait-on donner sinon celui de l'*impressionnisme*?[6]

The downside of this so-called Impressionism is that it contains the seeds of its own destruction. When the impression itself is overvalued, when style no longer seeks to render that which appears to be, Decadence is born. Language becomes all-important, an end in itself, and words become separated from their referents, making visions anything but 'real'. This much is acknowledged by one of the pioneering theoreticians of Decadence, Paul Bourget, who questions the production of effects and suggests that the realism behind impressions is not what art is about in a Decadent aesthetic. In 1881, Bourget formulated his view of Decadence in the following manner:

---

[5] 'Les Goncourt, La Bruyère et l'art du portrait', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 6 (1998), 74-94 (p. 86).
[6] *Réalisme et impressionnisme dans l'oeuvre des frères Goncourt* (Pisa: Editrice Libreria Goliardica, 1971), pp. 46-7.

> Un style de décadence est celui où l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance du mot.[7]

Coupled with a diminishing concentration on plot and a shedding of naturalist analytical apparatuses, the privileging of style orients Edmond de Goncourt's novels towards the Decadence of the 1880s and 1890s. The link between this movement and the Goncourts' shared style is so clear to Louis Marquèze-Pouey that he has referred to their writing, in particular the lessening role of plot and the increased importance of language, as 'le style même de l'époque'.[8] A similar attitude is more or less held by Edmond de Goncourt himself, who, in the 1884 preface to *Chérie*, admits that he has attempted to rid the novel of intrigue in order to focus on psychological analysis. In Edmond de Goncourt's four solo novels, as we shall see in chapter 4 B, story is downgraded in favour of a conception of analysis that relies on the disintegration of the novelistic whole. Rather than recount a linear story, the novels depict fragments that are bound together by their very disparity and their very artistic particularity, rather than by strict cause and effect associations. This beacons an almost unavoidable deviation towards a *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic, where *mimesis* is supplanted by *poesis* and where Naturalism is overtaken by an aestheticised version of itself. It also paves the way for the modernism of the twentieth century.

Edmond de Goncourt's style very much participates in the repositioning of views of the ideal novel. The characters' heightened interest in artistic refinement (4 E) and the linguistic rarefaction through which this is expressed (4 D) is crystallised by authors such as Huysmans, Octave Mirbeau and Georges Rodenbach. Innovations in poetry have equally been attributed to 'écriture artiste'.[9] One eminent literary critic of

---

[7] *Essais de psychologie contemporaine: études littéraires*, ed. by André Guyaux (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), p. 14.
[8] *Le Mouvement décadent en France* (Paris: PUF, 1986), p. 103.
[9] See Philip Stephan's study of Verlaine, particularly his discussion of 'écriture artiste' on page 106 and thereafter.

Naturalism views the move from the Goncourts' 'écriture artiste' to Decadence as a natural progression, arguing that 'une prose *décadente* [est] issue de la prose *artiste*'.[10] Rémy de Gourmont, who first met Edmond de Goncourt in 1884, does not discuss the Decadence of the Goncourts directly, but the language he uses to discuss their joint stylistic innovation and the lessons it teaches highlights certain elements that have corrrelations in the movement. This supports the argument that the Goncourts' aesthetic, continued by Edmond de Goncourt alone, contributed to the elaboration of the Decadent mode that reached its pinnacle at the end of the nineteenth century:

> Trouver des phrases que nul n'a encore faites, en même temps claires, harmonieuses, justes, vivantes, émondées de tout parasitisme oratoire, de tout lieu commun, des phrases où les mots, même les plus ordinaires, prennent, comme les notes en musique, une valeur de position, des phrases un peu tourmentées, greffées adroitement de ces incidents qui déconcertent, puis charment l'oreille et l'esprit lorsqu'on saisit le ton et le mécanisme de l'accord, des phrases qui se meuvent comme des êtres, oui, qui semblent vivre d'une vie délicieusement factice, comme des créations de magie.[11]

De Gourmont's own sentence is slightly tortuous and more than a little artificial, though it does effectively promote the view that the Goncourts were the witchdoctors of words, or – perhaps an equally suitable analogy for a Decadent age – snake charmers mesmerising readers with their evocative, suggestive style. It is a self-contained style that requires immense concentration on the part of the reader and that evokes Mallarméan poetics in which analysis is only permitted insofar as it is poetic and stylistic, insofar as it does not contribute to understanding of a linear whole.

In the discussions that follow, it is precisely this disintegration that will be studied. However, due to the constraints of space, no new syntactical or grammatical analysis of 'écriture artiste' will be offered. Instead, building on the background of

---

[10] Henri Mitterand, *Le Regard et le signe* (Paris: PUF, 1987), p. 271.
[11] *Le Deuxième livre des masques* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1917), p. 266.

grammatical and stylistic interpretations of the Goncourts' joint novels, various less studied aspects of 'écriture artiste' will be explored in an attempt to identify a literary passage from Naturalism to Decadence. In terms of plot development, narrativity, representation of speech and conceptions of language, *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882) and *Chérie* (1884) announce the emergence of a new literature that eschews unity and comprehension (even readability, at times). Instead the novels adopt an aesthetic derivative of Naturalism, but based on a more rarefied vision of the artistic ideal. This new aesthetic revolves around the failure of language as a medium of communication (4 C). The style of the novels, the following chapters will argue, is indissociable from the increasingly Decadent themes that they portray.

Chapter 4B
Language
Plot Development

Plot development is one of the areas where Edmond de Goncourt's novels deviate most dramatically from typical conceptions of the Naturalist novel. This difference can be appreciated on a structural level, as well as in the extent to which the novels rely on physiological paradigms less as a means of explaining events than as a means of decorating the narrative. Diachronic analysis demonstrates that cause and effect is eschewed not only in relation to hereditary causality, but also on the level of narration, where the systematic use of the imperfect tense immobilises the flow of the narratives. In addition, the narrators of the novels insinuate themselves into the texts and deploy an expository strategy that confuses individual circumstances with general types. This juxtaposition of specific and general results in a temporal paralysis, or textual inertia, that gets in the way of linear plot progression in *La Fille Élisa*, *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin* and *Chérie*.

Supple Structures

There are overarching structural or compositional similarities between the four novels, but, paradoxically, that which attests to their common parentage is their instability. All four novels feature brisk transitions between chapters of vastly different lengths and focus. In each novel chapters leap from subject to unconnected subject; chapter length can have little to do with the significance of the chapter content. In each novel time is extremely malleable. As a consequence of this structure, the logical progression of the texts is not always immediately apparent.

In terms of structure, the 1877 novel is unique. *La Fille Élisa* has a relatively tight structure for a Goncourtian novel - a prologue, two halves of similar length, the first having 34 chapters, the second 30 - yet, its chapters are unevenly balanced. One of

the shortest introduces the crucial love affair between Élisa and the soldier, Tanchon; some of the longest describe people who have but minimal importance in the narrative (the prostitutes in chapters 37 and 38, and the musician in chapter 12, for example). One of the chapters (3) accounts for six years in one sentence, while others leap from travelling furiously around France to being settled at a brothel near the École militaire (chapters 18 and 19). Chapter 42 makes reference to 'deux années en prison', while chapter 43 begins 'la nuit'. Though the shape of the novel is for all appearances quite rigid, the variations and contrasts within the two parts are enormous.

Regardless of the misleading framework of *La Fille Élisa*, none of the subsequent novels has so formal a structure. *Les Frères Zemganno*, which has 86 chapters, also advances through time by leaps and bounds. The first 60 chapters describe Gianni and Nello's life from childhood to present, while the remaining chapters focus, for the most part, on the discovery of the leap, and the few weeks surrounding it, thereby displaying how temporal aspects of plot development are organised, condensed and expanded. Within the first half of the 1879 novel, which unlike *La Fille Élisa* is not formally divided into halves, huge spans of time are accounted for in very few words. In comparison, *La Faustin* has 64 chapters that recount at most a year in the main character's life, the central event of which is William Rayne's return in chapter 21. *Chérie*, on the other hand, has a remarkable 105 chapters that cover almost two decades and range in length from tens of pages to a few impressionistic sentences. In the 1884 novel, it would be well nigh impossible to identify one chapter as most important, or to identify one chapter as a definitive turning point in the story. The novel could be said to hinge on Chérie's non-marriage, but her announcement regarding this is buried deep inside a chapter dealing with, for the most part, a visit to a horticulturalist. There is nothing on a presentational or structural level to suggest an orderly or systematic advance or progression in these texts. Zola's novels, in comparison, tend to contain chapters of similar length and are fairly evenly

balanced. Such is the case with *Nana*, *L'Assommoir*, and *Au Bonheur des Dames*, which have between twelve and fourteen chapters with an average of thirty pages. Indeed, *L'Assommoir*'s 13 chapter structure has a symbolic function, charting as it does the ascent and downfall of Gervaise. The novels *Germinal* and *La Terre* are even more rigidly structured, the first comprising seven parts that are further subdivided, the second five constituent parts. Moreover, in the Zolian novel, chapters tend to focus on a particular subject and can be usefully identified by their theme.

Some of Goncourt's chapters are so short that they are like parts of a whole; others so long that their relation to the narrative is not immediately clear. Structural imbalance is also generated by the so-called documentary focus of the texts. *La Fille Élisa* contains a letter and reproduces a prison menu, *Les Frères Zemganno* describes at length a past pantomime performance, *Chérie* includes a list of balls, a diary and a rule of conduct. The chapters that include these 'documents' (which may or may not be drawn from reality) are among the longest of the book, but nevertheless have very little bearing on its events. The deployment of documents further aggravates narrative continuity. On the whole, in the three later works, at the same time as the stories themselves become less intricate, the accumulation of fragments of varying length and content stands in for temporal advancement, moves through space become moves through time by virtue of the fact that - to borrow Freudian terminology- events and states are condensed and stretched to fit the narrative.[1] Imbalance prevails.

[1] Sigmund Freud, 'On Dreams' in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 153. Roland Barthes argues that suspense is but a 'forme privilégiée de la distortion'. 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', in R. Barthes, W. Kayser, *et al*, *Poétique du récit* (Paris, Seuil 'Points', 1977), pp. 7-57 (p. 47).

Hereditary Illnesses

In keeping with Naturalist desires to base plot on analysing how people with specific hereditary dispositions are affected by time, place, and race, two of Goncourt's novels, *La Fille Élisa* and *Chérie*, both of which start *in medias res*, provide biographical information about the characters and the milieux from which they spring early on in the text. Biographical information is provided in *Les Frères Zemganno*, as well, but in *La Faustin* it is largely absent and is not used to explain Juliette's behaviour. Scientific models provide a backbone for *La Fille Élisa*, but in later texts are present only on a more superficial level. They no longer formally inform plot development.

The relatively formal nature of *La Fille Élisa*'s structure is reflected in its plot which is the most conventionally Naturalist of the four post-1870 novels. The main character has several hurdles to overcome and these test her mental and physiological constitution. *La Fille Élisa* proper begins by providing years' worth of biographical and background information that is, arguably, unnecessary to the unfolding of the story, though Élisa's violent temperament plagues her throughout the novel, until she altogether loses the desire and ability to act in any way. Childhood illness leaves her with residual traces of 'hébétement' (p. 15); Élisa is pushed into violent action by 'impulsions mystérieuses' (p. 154); she loses control of her body 'à l'improviste' due to 'sensations [...] fugaces' (p. 104) and suffers from an 'indigestion avec des espèces de convulsions' which leads to 'phénomènes hystériques' (pp. 105-6). 'Il y avait chez elle,' it is specified, 'cette distension de la fibre, cette mollasserie des chairs' (p. 73). The theme of silence is introduced when Élisa is still a child, as she suffers from a 'resserrement douloureux du gosier' (p. 104), 'des maladies de la gorge et du larynx' (p. 131). By the end of the novel, which plots Élisa's physical and mental deterioration, these physical manifestations of animality are reflected in Élisa's moral life: 'bientôt l'indifférence de son corps pour tout, Élisa la retrouvait dans les mouvements de son âme' (p. 169). In this sense, the role of physiology in the 1877

novel is not to be underrated. Yet, the details provided in book one are not central to plot development for even if Élisa were normal, she would still be forbidden from speaking in prison.

At the beginning of *Chérie* the reader is presented with a tea party in progress (narrated in the present) only for the novel to lurch to an uncharacteristically long chapter that undertakes to explain the main character's aristocratic genealogy. This includes much detail on great-grandparents and grandparents. By 1884, however, heredity is largely incidental to Goncourt's story, as Chérie's behaviour is not influenced by any genetic traits specific to her. It is female biology in general that is malignant, not Chérie's specific biological or genetic make-up. There are no events that test her composition. Subsequent to the initial presentation of her family, there is little mention of anyone other than the girl's grandfather. Her dead father (whose career resembles that of the Goncourts' father), is notable for his 'force physique' (p. 19). There is a 'ressemblance extraordinaire de la petite avec le jeune officier' (p. 42), but she nonetheless dies through a lack of force, of will to survive, and is thus the opposite of her father. Her Spanish mother flees into the woods of the family property, Nonains-les-Muguet, renouncing speech, after the death of her husband. She is then locked in a walled compound on the grounds of the family home. Despite possible similarities between her and Chérie, she is mentioned only in passing and only plays a minor role in the novel regardless of the fact that she wilfully refuses to speak. It is not specified whether Chérie inherits this trait from her mother. The only indications of inherited characteristics are references to her mother's Spanish blood which makes Chérie mature more quickly than her purely French peers. Little attempt is made to tie Chérie's deteriorating mental and physical state to that of her mother or father.

This is equally true of *Les Frères Zemganno* where family history is tied to the story of the Zemgannos' feat. In the opening chapter of the 1879 novel, the Bescapé family

circus ride from the distance into the foreground, slowly coming into focus as the chapter progresses. The initial chapters of the novel all deal with Gianni and Nello's childhood and parentage. The most prominent inherited trait that the brothers share, their fatal flaw of sorts, is their dreamy nature that makes them yearn for beautiful artistic achievement. This craving is attributed to their 'sang bohémien' (p. 73). Their 'virtuosité' or 'ascendance bohémienne' (pp. 159 and 134) in things musical and artistic, stems from their bohemian Russian mother who is repeatedly described with reference to her wild primitiveness (she is a 'fille de ces primitives populations vagabondantes' (p. 21) and acts 'ainsi qu'une bête' (p. 65). Nello is more like her, sharing as he does her 'conformation physique' (p. 117). This physical resemblance prompts Gianni into action when he realises that the two share the same constant cough. Nello's cough 'réveillait dans la mémoire de Gianni [...] le souvenir que leur mère était morte d'une phtisie' (p. 117) caused by an unnamed malady ('on ne le savait!' [p. 66]). The fear of illness is related to the fact that the brothers depend on their bodies for their art, and their art is not only their livelihood, but provides their life with meaning. In the end it matters little that Stepanida Bescapé dies of a 'phtisie', for Gianni and Nello's downfall is independent of their hereditary characteristics. Moreover, it is stated that all circus performers live with the thought that 'cette force adroite dont ils vivent, peut être tout à coup supprimée par une maladie, un rhumatisme, un rien de dérangé dans la machine physique' (p. 148). By all accounts Gianni's worry stems from two sources. It is the worry of all gymnasts as much as a particular fear of a hereditary curse.

While it is implied in *Les Frères Zemganno* that Gianni and Nello's 'confiance morale' (p. 86) is a result of what could be called their 'confiance physique' - the brothers' closeness is dependent on sentimental as well as physical causes. In contrast to the explanations of the brothers' physical affinity to their mother, the bonds that bind them to each other are not explained in medical or scientific terms. Rather, they are 'liens mystérieux, des attaches d'atomes crochus de natures jumelles' (p. 162).

The impulses behind their performances are also shrouded in mystery. Gianni becomes so absorbed in gymnastic creation that he performs all other functions like a machine: 'L'existence animale, ses actes, ses fonctions, semblaient s'accomplir chez lui, comme par la continuation d'une mécanique remontée pour quelque temps, et sans qu'il y eût en rien une participation de son individu' (p. 152). Extraordinarily, artistic creation renders him animal-like. Unlike in *La Fille Élisa*, however, this animal-like behaviour is not presented as degraded, but as an indication of Gianni's preoccupations with things of a higher order. Nello, on the other hand, is subject to 'impulsions de courants magnétiques biscornus' (p. 144) when preparing to perform. His features are transformed 'dans une sorte de dilatation extatique' (p. 145) and he is no longer master of his actions ('gestes dont il n'avait pas l'absolue volonté' [p. 144]). Although these conditions could very well lead to something more malign in the novel, in the end the failure of the Zemgannos' revolutionary performance has little to do with their physiological predispositions and everything to do with a *femme fatale*. Red herrings of this sort are distinctively un-Naturalist.

Physiological details are used to a lesser extent in causal relationships in *La Faustin*. In relation to Juliette's performances, attention is on the transformation of the woman into the actress, with descriptions pertaining to 'développements des organes vocaux' (p. 102) and the 'muscles de la face' (p. 81). Otherwise, physiological information is used to vastly different ends than in previous novels, and paints a picture of voluntary rather than biologically imposed corruption. *La Faustin* is the only one of Goncourt's four novels that does not provide elaborate background information regarding the main characters. In truth, little is revealed about Juliette's upbringing and parentage other than that she and her sister were late and impoverished orphans. There is, on the other hand, much detail relating to Bonne-Ame, Juliette's incorrigibly libertine sister. Bonne-Ame, on whom 'crispations nerveuses coururent ondulantes' (p. 68), is propelled towards more debauched action so that she is last described as having 'la farouche grandeur de la prostituée de l'Apocalypse' (p. 242).

The encounter between Juliette and the fencing instructor likens them to animals, such is their desire to copulate (in the end, though, Juliette flees before she succumbs to her animal instincts). Elsewhere, in what can be construed as a metatextual comment on the mechanisms governing Naturalist creation, a character laments the fact that his lover has failed to have a child. He thought the mating experiment would result in a 'produit très particulier … très curieux'. 'L'expérience,' he states, '[n'a] pas réussi' (p. 227). To say this reveals a certain scepticism or playfulness with regard to the validity of studying evolutionary principles.

A conspicuous shift away from Naturalism is visible in the diminishing importance of the role assigned to medical and sociological cause and effect in Edmond de Goncourt's novels. David Weir argues that 'the difference between naturalistic determinism and decadence is the difference between a mechanism for malaise and the malaise itself'.[2] These novels are examples of the growing distinction between the two. They present alternative approaches to the connection between causality and aesthetic values, and attest to a mediation between Naturalism and Decadence, as neither the mechanism for malaise nor the malaise itself is, at this stage, fully developed.

How Plots Unfold

As scientific doctrine loses its dominant position in providing explanations for characters' motivations and evolution, so the mechanisms governing how events unfold become less reliant on traditional story-telling tools such as suspense. This leads to the novel where nothing happens.

---

[2] *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 45.

La Fille Élisa can be summarised very briefly, such is the relative dearth of action and event in its pages. In short, the main character runs away from her Parisian home to become a prostitute in Alsace-Lorraine. After a rural idyll of a few years, she leaves her provincial brothel to follow her lover across France, tormented, much like the Zemgannos and Chérie, by a 'besoin inquiet de changement', 'en quête d'un mieux' (p. 70). She eventually returns to Paris where her 'true' love, a soldier, attempts to rape her. She kills him and is sentenced to the rest of her days in prison. There she is condemned to perpetual silence and dies, several years later, of madness. In terms of intricacy, the plot is not very involved.

Where there are signs of suspense in Goncourt's 1877 text, it is produced by telling the tale from a position of completion, by making story - what events have happened chronologically - and plot - the way they are presented textually - diverge.[3] The jumps between present and past, and the jumps within the past, allow the narrator to manipulate what details are revealed, and when. The novel builds up, slowly, to a murderous climax, but this climax - presented in chapter 48, after one of its results, the trial, has been presented - has little do with the theme of the second section of the novel, that of silence. In other words, the central concern that is the prison, according to the author's stated intentions in the preface (for what they are worth), has little to do with the main incident that occurs in the novel, the murder. As such, Élisa's actions are disconnected from the focus of the novel: they are secondary to their outcome, how Élisa gets to prison is of little consequence, so long as she does get there. Élisa's life as a prostitute is kept separate from the account of her descent into hysteria due to the fact that the novel is divided into two halves. Although Ricatte argues that 'dans le roman l'hystérie d'Élisa est une conséquence de sa vie de prostituée',[4] the two states seem to be fairly distinct in terms of the structure of the

[3] These terms are adapted from Tzvetan Todorov's distinction between 'fabula' and 'sjuzet' as explained in 'The Typology of Detective Fiction' in *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London and New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 158-65 (p. 160).
[4] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* (Paris: PUF, 1960), p. 60.

novel and the manner and order in which events are revealed to the reader. Indeed, they could be two independent stories.

Even though there are few events in *La Fille Élisa*, they are all introduced through textual clues so that a modicum of suspense is created within the story through carefully timed revelations. This is first exemplified in the prologue which plunges the reader directly into a trial. Élisa's trial is not mentioned again until the final chapter of book one, which ends on these words: 'il y avait une petite ligne rouge *comme aux ongles des femmes qui ont fait des confitures de groseilles dans la journée*. (Déposition du témoin).' (p. 112). Symmetry is established by opening and closing the first book with trial-related details. The first chapter of the second book maintains the legal thread of the preceding chapters, but this time focuses on the transfer of the criminal to the prison, symbolically called 'Noirlieu'. These various indications occasion a certain amount of puzzlement about the trial: what has Élisa done? Why is she on trial, how does book two relate to book one? The details of one event - the murder - are revealed in a way that does not follow chronological order.

In part two, the earlier mystery is resolved, but not before the prison is described. Prior to her arrival at Noirlieu, Élisa hides a letter in her hair. No further explanation of this gesture is offered. It can only be assumed that its very mention is pertinent: 'Avec le brusque mouvement d'une mémoire qui se rappelle une chose oubliée, subitement, elle tirait du milieu du linge, qui remplissait un petit panier de paille noir, un morceau de papier graisseux qu'elle glissait dans ses cheveux, le dissimulant sous l'épaisseur de son chignon' (p. 115). When it is eventually revealed that this letter is improbably written in blood, 'la vision de la terrible journée lui revenait' (p. 143). At this point the narrative moves a further step into the past, until the events of Élisa and the soldier's courtship converge with the principal story of Élisa's imprisonment. Regardless of these loose threads, clues are few and far between. On the other hand, the few strands of mystery that are left in place, together with the pseudo-medical

framework deployed to justify Élisa's violent disposition, illustrate the mechanisms governing plot development, mechanisms which are less conspicuous in Goncourt's later novels.

Les Frères Zemganno is presented in a much more straightforward manner. It begins with the brothers' childhood and finishes with the end of their circus career. In opposition to *La Fille Élisa*, *Les Frères Zemganno*, like the two later novels, advances chronologically. No mystery is presented in its initial pages and prolepse surrounds but one issue: the success or failure of the gymnastic routine that Gianni and Nello have spent years trying to perfect. The abstract possibility of failure is first raised in chapter 20 where the difficulty for gymnasts of co-ordinating bodily movements is emphasised: 'où, une seconde seulement, le manque d'entente de leurs deux corps, l'inintelligence de leur contact, pouvait amener pour l'un et pour l'autre, et quelquefois pour tous les deux, le plus grave accident' (p. 86). This comment is followed by the assurance that the brothers' bodies will always operate in unison, as one. The subject of failure is only temporarily put aside, however, for chapter 29 specifies that the money from the sale of the family's travelling show is being safeguarded in case of unforeseen circumstances, 'pour un cas imprévu, pour un de ces accidents arrivant si souvent dans leur profession' (p. 108). It is subsequently explained in general terms that all it takes for a stunt to fail is a 'grain de sable inconnu' (p. 154). None of these negative remarks are made specifically with Gianni and Nello in mind. In subsequent chapters this changes.

Nello would do anything that his brother asked of him, no matter how dangerous: 'tout ce que tu trouveras, au risque de me casser le cou, je le ferai' (p. 169). The next page refers to pride bought 'plus cher que ça ne vaut' (p. 169). The foolishness of the new stunt is underlined by Nello who exclaims to his brother, not without humour, and using a strange expression itself redolent of Decadence or Symbolism: 'Bon merci! Le saut tout seul ne te paraît pas suffisant... et il y a une sauce à ton saut

d'équilibre, je parie... et du violon vertigineux..., et de tout le diable et son travail... et peut-être de la casse' (pp. 187-8). The final article of their contract stipulates that the circus management is not responsible for any work-related accident. In this fashion, through these seemingly banal comments, the seeds of doubt are sown. Nevertheless, there is no reason that the two acrobats should fail at their trick, as the textual hints of failure and danger are not immediately connected to any action that produces a negative (or positive) effect on the situation. There is no suggestion of a Naturalist sort that a hereditary trait or medical condition will lead to failure. Indeed, biology and physiology - apart from the manner in which gymnasts and acrobats manipulate their bodies - have little active function in the novel.

In order to overcome the problem of what will cause the brothers' downfall - as no hereditary fault or condition more sinister than an over-involvement in their art plagues the brothers - an agent of change is introduced into the story, in a fine illustration of *deus ex machina*: it is at this point in the narrative that the American equestrian, 'la' Tompkins, surfaces. Tompkins, who has a 'physionomie fauve, animale' (p. 185), is described in terms of her eccentricity and her impetuousness, her wealth, and her exotic and self-indulgent extra-curricular activities. She is, in other words, the quintessential *fin-de-siècle femme fatale*. It is Tompkins who brings about Nello's downfall, possibly in retribution for his having spurned her amorous advances, possibly as a result of her fetish for disaster. What should have been the cause of the accident according to more Romantic logic - the artist's ambition to go too far - is not, in fact, the cause in *Les Frères Zemganno*. The relation between artistic ambition and life is left open (perhaps because of the biographical elements of the novel). From the moment Tompkins is presented, the text focuses more and more closely on the details leading up to the first public performance of the Zemganno Brothers (until the leap, the acrobats keep their given name of Bescapé). Accordingly, time closes in on the main characters. One night, the night of the performance, is elongated, drawn out, and spread over five chapters, one of which -

66 - is the longest of the novel. Some of the happenings in these five chapters are meant to occur simultaneously. As a consequence, the night of the performance has dream-like qualities. The leap itself is akin to a daydream and each of the constituent chapters contributes to the overall drama by painting different impressions and points-of-view, resulting in what could be called a 'composite structure'.[5]

As *Les Frères Zemganno* centres more closely on specific events (rather than, for example, general states or extended periods of time), the possibility of failure supplants the possibility of success that until this point had been advanced by the narrator. No longer are negative suggestions rebutted by assertions affirming the skill and superiority of the brothers. Nello is told to stop harassing the equestrian and to be fearful of her, but instead, satisfaction with his artistic progress renders him more cruel towards her. The director of the *Cirque d'été* believes that the audacity of the brothers' stunt must be publicised widely. He tells them: 'Le danger, le péril de la mort, qu'il y a dans votre exercice... il est besoin que la presse développe, mâche cela au public' (p. 204). The night of the première, Gianni perceives that his brother is racked by doubt – 'un doute du succès' (p. 204). The public is hungry for excitement because 'la fortune d'un avenir... est en jeu' (p. 211). They want to 'voir manger de l'homme' (p. 211). An added worry is that Tompkins, who is not normally present at the circus when she is not working, is present on the night of the première. To add to the sense of unease, the remarks of the audience regarding the success rate of the gymnasts are reproduced: 'et ils ne l'ont jamais manqué' (p. 216). This statement is not met with any reply, but with ellipses that forcibly change the subject. Ellipses and absences abound in this section and contribute to a growing sense of nothingness and of absence and danger. The same 'ellipsis' treatment is given two other statements: 'le moindre contact...' (p. 216); 'Je ne voudrais pas faire l'échange de mes membres contre les leurs dans une heure d'ici...' (p. 217). As Jacques Noiray

[5] 'From every element in a dream's content associative threads branch out in two or more directions; every situation in a dream seems to be put together out of two or more impressions or experiences.' Sigmund Freud, 'On Dreams', p. 153.

observes, 'c'est seulement comme *blanc*, comme indicible pur, que la chute de Nello peut être montrée dans le récit'.[6] Given the association between the Zemgannos and the Goncourts, as explored in chapter 3 B, this aesthetic of emptiness operates as a pessimistic mirror to the Goncourts' own aesthetic struggles. All of these doubts - the audience's and Nello's - undermine the possibility of the Zemgannos discovering a 'pure' art and performing a new stunt. The doubts are condensed into a few chapters, even though in actual fact they underpin the entire narrative and are the dark foundation upon which it is built.

The concentrated build-up of action in *Les Frères Zemganno* is in stark contrast to *La Faustin* and *Chérie*. In these two novels there is precious little plot and limited use of techniques such as foreshadowing or suspense. In addition, and importantly, cause and effect is detached from a Naturalist framework. Plot, or narrative interest, is almost completely absent from the 1882 and 1884 novels – particularly *Chérie* – and replaced by analyses of intimate psychoses. Juliette's illness, if indeed it can be called an illness, is entirely internalised. She admits 'je suis deux' (p. 46) and refers to 'ma maladie du théâtre' (p. 254). Her problems are related to her profession, not her constitution. Juliette Faustin is an actress whose aristocratic British lover reappears as she embarks on the performance of a lifetime as Phèdre. Her keeper, Blancheron, commits suicide (not seen in the novel, but announced by a death letter), and this allows Juliette to pursue her affair with Lord Annandale. Annandale, however, in a bid to strip her of the power she draws from artifice, does not wish to share her with the public, so she eventually forsakes her career. Once away from the theatrical environment Juliette becomes obsessed by acting. In the climax of the novel, Lord Annandale throws Juliette out of their room when she mimics his illness. Otherwise, very little happens in the novel, a fact which is doubly apparent when it is compared to Zola's *Nana* (1880), which, like Goncourt's novel, involves a kept woman and the

[6] 'Tristesse de l'acrobate: création artistique et fraternité dans *Les Frères Zemganno*', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 259 (2000), 91-110 (p. 107).

theatre. *Nana*, however, also involves prostitution, lesbianism, physically abusive relationships, arrest and abandonment, hereditary alcoholism, in addition to themes dealing with the theatre. Whereas there are logical stages to Gervaise's (Nana's mother whose story is told in *L'Assommoir*) deterioration, there are no stages to Juliette and Annandale's individual downfalls. Juliette is presented as double from the outset of the novel, because she is an actress and not because of her heritage, and she can be no other. Annandale's illness is only analysed in the closing chapter of the novel, during his agony. How he arrived at this drastic state is incidental to the story. The comparison between *La Faustin* and *Nana* is telling as it demonstrates how two authors, allegedly of the same literary persuasion, approach a similar subject using different means and achieve vastly different end results.

The Zola-Goncourt comparison is also enlightening with respect to both authors' 1884 literary output. *Chérie* and *La Joie de vivre* both portray the development of young girls. As mentioned with reference to the 'document humain', reproductive issues are present in both novels. Both contain scenes relating to menstruation. In *Chérie*, three chapters describe the transformation from girl to woman, the 'métamorphose morale' (p. 140), occasioned by the onset of puberty, but the issue is not referred to again even though it is specified that it leaves Chérie with a 'sensibilité maladive tout à fait anormale' (p. 140). In *La Joie de vivre* Pauline's menstruation is a structuring device: she bleeds on the night of Lazare's marriage to another, and when their child is born. Chérie has everything she wants except a husband and she eventually goes mad and dies as a consequence of this. She faces no challenges other than those posed by her own reproductive organs. *La Joie de vivre* is a Cinderella story gone wrong where the hard-done-by Pauline is orphaned and impoverished by her extended family who take advantage of her while thwarting her romantic intentions. Nonetheless, the saintly Pauline cares for them and saves them in times of crisis (saving the child of the man she loves). In Goncourt's novel, Chérie announces to her grandfather in passing that she does not wish to marry. The rest of

the novel portrays the girl doing progressively more degenerate things, including eating maggoty cheese - because of her body's corrupt need to marry, and therefore, reproduce. The unquestioned scientific link between the two is, of course, tenuous, and does not seem to adequately account for the turn of events. The girl becomes ill and deranged until she is ecstatically overwhelmed by an opera in the penultimate chapter of the novel. While at the theatre, Chérie says 'Adieu' to a friend and the following chapter, the final chapter, is an obituary notice. Goncourt's 1884 novel seems positively devoid of narrative interest when compared to Zola's.

The absence of cause and effect and, indeed, plot, is intensely unorthodox in terms of nineteenth-century fiction. In *Chérie*, a metatextual hint is given as to why this method is adopted. In a discussion of childhood memories, it is stated that 'l'enfance, en la mémoire de celui ou de celle qui se souvient, ressemble à un grand espace vide, dans lequel quatre ou cinq petits événements se lèvent, surgissent dans une espèce de netteté photographique' (p. 72). This remark applies as much to the later Goncourtian novel, where events are either absent or detached from each other, as it does to Chérie's recollections, and functions as a screen that suggests a depth of character that is not really there. By 1884, Goncourt's novels describe much more than they recount any linear tale. This highlights a fundamental distinction between the two primary modes of literary representation that dominate late nineteenth-century French literature. The changing presentation of physiological and psychological analysis at work here announces the emergence of Decadent discourse which is more closely aligned to the emerging fields of psychology and psychoanalysis than with the sociological and physiological trappings of Naturalism. Not only do the works progressively rely less on Naturalist causality, but they rely less on event, or cause and effect, of any kind, preferring to concentrate on fragmented moments in characters' lives that are interspersed with reflections of a very general nature.

An Imperfect Time

The challenges posed to the hereditary and causal framework of the novels is compounded by practices associated with 'écriture artiste'. One of the specific means by which the linear progression of the novels is hindered is in the juxtaposition of specific time markers and the imperfect tense. Specific plot information is often accompanied by a time marker but narrated in the imperfect, giving a false sense of progress that freezes the text. Alternatively, sentences are denied verbs altogether, in an ultimate act of plot assassination.

In *La Fille Élisa*, there are textual clues which create minor intrigues within the past story (that is to say, within the story of the misadventures that lead to Tanchon's death). Most of the first book is descriptive in nature, telling of changes in Élisa's circumstances and then describing the environment and people who surround her. A break in this monotony comes when chapter 20 opens with 'le moment était venu' (p. 65). This statement implies that suspense had been building up to this climatic moment, but the verb tenses in the succeeding description cast doubt on this. In truth, the chapter merely offers more description. All that occurs is Élisa's nightly hour of soliciting. False suspense is at work. An impression of temporal progress is given when, in fact, a 'typical' situation is being described: one paragraph begins 'soudain' (p. 68), another 'enfin' (p. 68). Time indications show not an unlikely or untypical event, but a repetitive, monotonous and normal occurrence in the life of the (or a) prostitute. Monotony is intensified by repeating the phrase 'elle allait, revenait' (pp. 65-6) four times in one paragraph. In this way, the chapter paints both a given night and any given night, and produces an immobilising flow between general and specific, between precise moments in time and timelessness.

The polarisation of general and specific is carried through to *Les Frères Zemganno*, and certain textual structures prevent any sense of progression through time. Chapter 12 is an example of the manner in which the linear impetus of the novel is stilted

through lack of action. It unfolds with the sweeping assertion that 'les années se succédaient et perpétuellement ils [les frères] couraient la France' (p. 61). The examples of the clown brothers' peregrinations that are provided are all prefixed with 'un jour ils étaient' - an instance of the meeting of the imperfect tense and the singular event. This is used no less than nine times in one (rather repetitive) paragraph (pp. 61-2). The next paragraph links events with the conjunctions 'un jour' and 'un autre' (used five times); 'et de' joins actions in the final paragraph. All of these conjunctions freeze the narrative by presenting lists of places. These lists inform the reader of physical displacements through over-elaborate precision. The distinctiveness of each place is negated, however, due to the fact that each movement is presented in a similar fashion. All movement is presented as equally important insofar as each place-name occupies the same place in the syntagm. A succession of names replaces actions. The ensuing chapter, by contrast, only emphasises the malleability of time. It begins 'certains jours' and deals, paradoxically, with the particular behaviour of the gymnast clowns' mother, Stépanida Roudak.

In other instances, verbs are conjugated in such a way as to make it difficult to identify the central action of a sentence. This, in turn, renders it difficult to establish any cause and effect relationships in the texts, and renders it potentially impossible for the narratives to advance. In *Les Frères Zemganno*, the following sentence begins by signalling an unexpected event, only to conceal the actual incident within a complex maze of subordinate clauses: 'Soudainement, la lune se dégageant des arbres, tombait en plein sur l'enfant dormant, qui comme chatouillé par sa blanche clarté, se mettait à remuer la grâce de son corps nu dans des mouvements indolents' (p. 13). The movement across time suggested by 'soudainement' is negated by the paralysing structure of the sentence. There is a contradiction between time markers and verb tense. Any sense of anticipation introduced by 'soudainement' is cancelled out by the use of present participles that make it difficult to identify the main clause, and, therefore, the action. The sentence would have been unproblematic, however, if

the more active past historic had taken the place of the imperfect, or, as it is called in the 1879 novel, 'ce cruel imparfait' (p. 255). Instead, false suspense is created by the use of this tense to designate events that are not typical, but specific. The imperfect confers a somewhat despairing sense of timelessness, of inability to progress, on a scene that is supposed to be unique. It is also, in many ways, the impressionist tense *par excellence*, as it gives the point-of-view of an observer, rather than telling the story as a list of self-sufficient events. The imperfect reigns in *Les Frères Zemganno* and in 'écriture artiste' in general and its use has prompted Jacques Noiray to write that the imperfect 'indique [...] une perte d'être, une négativité, une abolition dans le temps. Il est le signe de l'irrémédiable'.[7] Lack of active verbs creates fixity, and this fixity transforms individual moments into ones more universal and timeless.

In terms of the meeting of time and tense in Goncourt's novel, the obvious comparison to be drawn is with the novels of Gustave Flaubert, where the phenomenon of description paralysing action arises first and perhaps most distinctly in the nineteenth century. This is especially true of the continual use of time-related words in conjunction with the imperfect tense. Jean-Pierre Duquette, for example, has identified precise time markers as one of the factors that contribute to the temporal paralysis that plagues *L'Éducation sentimentale*. 'Grâce à ces marques', he writes, 'on voit s'établir tout un réseau de moments indépendants les uns des autres, qu'il n'y a plus alors qu'à relier entre eux (par la lecture même, linéaire).' He continues, 'le fait que ces indications soient pour la plupart très vagues, contribue à créer l'impression de temps dépassé, d'éternel présent un peu opaque, de temps du rêve'.[8] There is little movement across time in the Flaubertian novel according to this assessment. Descriptions are isolated from an active temporal framework and 'au lieu de faire avancer le récit', one critic argues, 'elles le retardent, le suspendent'.[9] A well-

[7] 'Tristesse de l'acrobate', p. 94.
[8] *Flaubert, ou l'architecture du vide* (Montréal: Presses de l'université de Montréal, 1972), p. 100.
[9] Jean Levaillant, 'Flaubert et la matière', *Europe*, 485-487 (1969), 202-9 (p. 207).

known essay by Proust also analyses Flaubert's use of the imperfect.[10] Similarly, in Edmond de Goncourt's novels, nothingness and emptiness prevail as a result of both the tension between time and tense that disrupts the linear flow of the narratives, and the extremely loose structuring of the novels which fragments them. While this stylistic trait may be encountered in the Goncourts' joint novels, its inertia is doubled in the later texts due to their thematic focus.

In *La Faustin* and *Chérie*, tense is equally problematic. The closing scene of the 1882 work confusingly deploys both passé simple and imperfect in an account of a conversation. When Annandale erupts at Juliette the first time, the verb used is 'dit'. Juliette's response, and Annandale's second outburst are both in the imperfect: 'Annandale jetait, une seconde fois' (p. 307). Because of this imperfect, the lover's words will ring forever. *Chérie* opens with an event that, unlike others in the novels, is narrated in the present. There are several other manners in which 'écriture artiste' contributes to a growing sense of paralysis in these novels: paragraphs are formed of a single sentence that spans pages; paragraphs start 'et', continuing a list begun in the previous one; words are separated from action as parts are detached from the whole and act individually of any human impetus or will: 'la silhouette rouge de l'avocat se promenait', 'des phrases commencées se taisaient' (*La Fille Élisa*, p. 4). No one is responsible for these actions and events because no person is attached to them. An equally effective means of paralysing the novels is the use of verb-less sentences. These sentences convey a feeling rather than an action, a state rather than an event, and are deterrents to narrative continuity. As there is no activity in these sentences, textually and linguistically they are non-events. Several examples can be identified in *La Fille Élisa*: 'Et aussitôt debout, devant la petite porte d'introduction de l'accusée, qu'il tient fermée derrière lui, un capitaine de gendarmerie' (p. 6): 'au dehors, aucun bruit, la paix d'un quartier mort, le silence d'une rue où l'on ne passe plus, la nuit

[10] 'À propos du style de Flaubert', in *Contre Sainte-Beuve, Pastiches et mélanges, Essais et articles*, ed. by Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard 'Pléiade', 1971), pp. 586-600.

tombée' (p. 29), 'aussitôt sur leurs sièges les juges' (p. 6). Verb-less sentences, or sentences without a principal clause, feature in the other novels as well and fulfil the same function.[11] They are similar to the verb-less sentences of Rimbaud and Mallarmé's prose poems and correspond to the Goncourts' desire to write a novel that is a 'poème en prose des sensations' (*Journal*, 7 Feb. 1869, 2, p. 199), or what in *Les Frères Zemganno* is called 'petits poèmes gymnastiques' (p. 128). There is no linear movement across time allowed in these scenes because there is no active verb to propel the plot.

Narrator Interventions

Narrator interventions fulfil several functions in Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels, most of which diverge from typical Naturalist practices whereby the narrator does not overtly insinuate himself into the text. On the one hand, narrator interventions delay the moment when textual information is revealed; on the other, narrator interventions are much more insidious. This is particularly the case when they yield a barrage of so-called evidence or proof, or make oblique reference to the creative process, to sources external to the text, and in the process of doing so shatter the illusion of fiction. Often these interventions destabilise the type/individual correlation that the text relies on to retain its scientific authority.

Perhaps the most striking example of a narrator intervention transpires in *Les Frères Zemganno*. The manipulation of time contributes to the inevitability of failure from the moment Tompkins - who remains otherwise nameless - is presented. Once Gianni and Nello's stunt is underway, time is halted by the narrator: the brothers are left mid-air as the action is stopped. Ironically, this is perhaps the sole moment that the clown brothers' ultimate desire to consummate a 'suspension dans le vide' (p. 119) is

[11] An example from *Chérie*: 'Des futaies de soixante ans descendant à pic autour de la propriété et l'enfermant dans un rideau aux dessous de bois tout fleuris, lors du printemps, de pervenche et de muguet' (p. 39).

realised, though, crucially, it can only be accomplished artificially through the intervention of the narrator. While the spectators stare 'visages soulevés vers le haut du tonneau' (p. 220), the narrator interrupts with a question, therefore delaying the moment that the outcome of the feat is revealed: 'Mais que se passait-il dans cette seconde anxieuse où la foule cherchait, voyait déja le jeune gymnaste sur les épaules de son frère?' (p. 220). What is remarkable is the fact that it is not events, or the revelation of hereditary weaknesses, that foreshadow and signal disaster, but rhetorical pauses in narration. In the end, the cause of the failure of the leap is external to the brothers. It is not something that they have control over, it is not something to which they are genetically predisposed, nor is it something the reader witnesses: the reader does not see the prop barrels being switched by Tompkins (the implied cause of the accident) in chapter 61, in which the accident occurs. Narration - the moves through time - and description - the painting of the scene - interrupt and delay the moment when the success or failure of the brothers is revealed. As a consequence, the brothers are artificially paralysed in their fantasy before they come crashing to their terrible fate once the narrator's intervention is over.

The description of the Zemgannos' leap furnishes one example of how the narrator's position can lead to paralysis of action, literally in the case of the paralysed Nello, and figuratively in the case of the novel. A paralysis similar to that created by the temporal instabilities involving tense and time and the concentration of all the action into concise blocks is occasioned by the narrator's intrusions into the text and the manner in which information passing as evidence is presented to the reader. One tactic that is often used by the narrator in these four novels is to announce an event and then describe the place and people who are influenced or introduced by the change. In this manner, general remarks are backed up by examples taken from the protagonists' lives. In *La Fille Élisa*, this gives the impression that the novel is not so much a work of fiction, but a study where an assertion is made and then backed up by the appropriate evidence. The 1877 novel deals with two hypotheses, both of

which would have been subversive at the time of its publication: firstly, that prostitutes could love, yet refuse sexual relations with their lover; secondly, that the sentence of perpetual silence reduced women to little more than imbeciles. One example taken from this first solo novel shows how a statement is backed up by evidence, as though it belonged in a report rather than a story. After asserting that 'elle avait de tranquilles soirées de paresse pareilles à celle-ci' (p. 29), a description of what could be any night follows in a separate chapter. *La Faustin* uses the structure as well: 'semblables à celui-ci' (p. 8). This is done repeatedly in Chérie: 'en voici un exemple'(p. 48), 'là-dessus un détail' (p. 92), 'voici la scène qui s'était passée la veille entre le grand-père et la petite fille' (p. 228). Such a procedure does much to draw attention away from the fictionality of the novel, towards its so-called reality. It disrupts the flow of the narratives by isolating examples from the thrust of the story, often placing them in their own chapters.

The 'reality' of the texts is also established by using an exemplification process that refers to documents. In *Chérie*, the procedure is used in relation to the 'règlement de vie': 'Voici le règlement de vie, tel qu'il était écrit sur un petit cahier de papier blanc' (p. 114). Another example, taken from *Les Frères Zemganno*, shows the same narrative technique: 'Voici le libretto d'une de ces fantaisies dont le Cirque conserve encore la mémoire' (p. 128). This introduction closes a chapter; the following chapter describes, in depth, the said routine. This method of exemplification does not contribute to the development of plot. It splits descriptions into two units, suggesting that there is a difference or a change. It even offers little insight into the characters. It does, however, convey the narrator's grasp of the circus environment and substitute descriptions for plot progressions. In the case of Élisa's blood-written letter, the exemplification is extended over several chapters, beginning in chapter twenty-nine where the following detail regarding the narrator's sources of information is revealed:

> Le soldat l'aime avec jalousie. Le soldat partage avec elle [la prostituée] son sou de l'État. Le soldat la promène avec orgueil. Le soldat lui écrit... Dans la

> démolition d'une maison de la Cité, un paquet de lettres, trouvé dans les décombres, me fut apporté. Toutes les lettres étaient des lettres de soldats (pp. 97-8).

At this point in the story the main character, Élisa, does not yet have a lover, so the information would, were it not for the documentary focus that legitimises and accentuates its inclusion, seem superfluous. The relevance of this knowledge only becomes apparent in chapter 35, in which the 'lettre graisseuse' is introduced. The sequence is brought to a close in chapter 44, which reproduces the letter that Élisa had kept hidden.[12] Yet, the fact that the letters are 'de soldats' does not necessarily mean that the Élisa's letter is one of the packet received.

Another means by which the narrator's dominance of the text is established is found in the way in which the reader is often directly addressed in the narratives. In *La Fille Élisa*, the narrator approaches the reader thus: 'ai-je dit' (p. 49), 'vous les voyez' (p. 33), 'disons-le' (p. 58). In *Les Frères Zemganno*, the statements 'vous le connaissez' (p. 166), 'vous auriez dit' (p. 25) and 'là était le coup de théâtre' (p. 46) fulfil the same function, as does 'vous vous la rappelez' (p. 97) in *Chérie*. More importantly, in chapter 15 of *La Fille Élisa*, the narrator includes himself and the reader in the same social and intellectual category, educated and male. This is accomplished by moving from the first person singular 'ai-je dit' to the first person plural 'nous' in a discussion of the working-class woman as reader of fiction (this discussion could be compared to the portrayal of Juliette and Chérie as readers, as well): 'Nous donnons notre intérêt, notre émotion, notre attendrissement, une larme parfois à de l'histoire humaine que nous savons ne pas avoir été. Si nous sommes ainsi trompés, nous! comment l'inculte et candide femme du peuple ne le serait-elle pas?' (p. 50). A diatribe on 'le silence continu' consolidates the narrator's position in chapter 40 of *La Fille Élisa*, but the above observations on the power of books can

[12] Both Élisa and Chérie hide personal documents on their bodies, a coincidence that perhaps merits further study.

just as easily be considered in metatextual terms. Indeed, Colette Becker construes chapter 15 as a commentary on the development of the novelistic form. She presents *La Fille Élisa* as a fine example of the questioning of the novel, traditionally held together by an alternance of descriptive pauses and intrigue.[13]

The narrator's superior status is further reinforced in the final chapter of the 1877 text, which relates the narrator's own past. It is revealed that Edmond de Goncourt is the narrator of the novel as well as its author. Framing devices of this sort are conventional in nineteenth-century literature; Edmond de Goncourt, however, goes beyond normal conventions with his revelation. In its closing pages, *La Fille Élisa* divulges its own history and offers insights into how it came into existence: 'Il y a des années, je passais quelques semaines dans un château des environs de Noirlieu. Un jour de désoeuvrement, la société avait la curiosité d'aller visiter la maison de détention des femmes' (p. 196). Julia Daudet - and she is probably not alone - believes that this revelation spoils the text (*Corres. Gonc-Daud*, letter 43, 5 Nov. 1876, p. 42). The link between fiction and reality at the end of the novel is highly complicated. Noirlieu is an overmotivated name - and virtually the opposite of the actual prison visited by the Goncourts, Clermont - which connotes fictionality in the same way that the mention of finding letters does. Both appear to be nothing more than stereotypical literary devices. Yet, Goncourt recounts a visit similar to that mentioned in *La Fille Élisa* in his *Journal* on 28 October 1862 (1, pp. 868-74). Moreover, as Robert Ricatte's genetic study of the novel indicates, Goncourt did, in effect, receive a packet of letters from a brothel.[14] This strategy is repeated in *Chérie*, where the narrator makes reference to 'mon frère et moi' (p. 44).

---

[13] '*La Fille Élisa*, ou comment tuer le romanesque: "une stupide absence d'elle-même"', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 7 (1999-2000), 194-204 (p. 195): 'Si l'on définit le modèle canonique du genre [roman] comme un récit de fiction avec personnages, fait d'une alternance de scènes [...] et de pauses (résumés ou descriptions), et marchant à travers péripéties et rebondissements vers un dénoument, *La Fille Élisa* paraît être un exemple privilégié de cette mise en question.'

[14] *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, pp. 69-74.

The blurred distinction between author and narrator adds to the moral and textual authority of the narrator, by insisting that he is not a purely fictional being. As such, this conforms closely with the Naturalist notion of the author as sage, scientist, and critic who explains rather than invents. Authorial interventions also bolster the legitimacy of the view of the novels as documentary studies based on observed nature - a Naturalist preoccupation - and occur in all four novels. In *La Faustin* they are particularly meaningful as the interventions come to carry the entire narrative inasmuch as they legitimise the authority and veracity of the text. Two examples of how the narrator cites empirical sources draw attention to this fact:

> Écoutez, sur ce premier moment de défaillance, la confidence faite à un de mes amis par une de nos plus vaillantes actrices (p. 44).
>
> Et ici, je ne puis résister à la tentation de donner, sur cette vie en partie double, un autre morceau de la lettre citée plus haut (p. 45).

Interrupting these two digressions is a statement relating solely to Juliette. Moreover, the recipient of this letter is not specified, and this lacuna calls into question the reliability of the statements. Even if the source were known, difficulty would arise insofar as one specific case, no matter how valid the source, cannot be extrapolated to apply to all cases. A similar interjection in *Chérie* fulfils the same function. When the narrator states 'à ce propos, je me rappelle dans une représentation de Philémon et Baucis, à l'Opéra Comique, avoir entendu une fillette de treize ans...' (p. 236) it signals his presence in both fiction and reality. Nonetheless, one of the primary functions - if not the primary function - of these passages is to insert the narrator into the text and to authenticate his assertions. This, in turn, implicates the reader in the narrator's belief system. Such tactics, paradoxically, fulfil an almost anti-Naturalist function as they detract from the scientificity of the novel, by drawing the narrator - whose views dominate the story at hand - in the realm of the fictitious.

David Baguley remarks with regard to Zola's reliance on 'a whole battery of quotations from Claude Bernard's *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine experimentale*' that 'quotation is a commonly recognised rhetorical strategy and a feature of authoritarian forms of discourse'.[15] This interpretation, though offered with non-fiction in mind, can quite easily be transposed and adapted to the role of the citational resources deployed in Edmond de Goncourt's novels. Furthermore, in the end, this textual strategy diverges from, instead of adhering to, accepted Naturalist practices where the author/narrator is expected to hide behind the text. In *La Fille Élisa*, due to the often didactic tone of the novel, the narrator's point-of-view rather than the heroine's relation to, and experience of, the outside world carries the story. Becker has raised this point in a recent article where she declares that 'loin de s'effacer derrière le personnage, (comme le demande Zola dans sa définition du roman naturaliste et comme il tend à le faire), Goncourt multiplie les intrusions d'auteur, les commentaires'.[16] In *La Faustin* and *Chérie*, the narrator's perspective and biases dominate because the characters themselves are fragmented and torn between several competing voices, as has already been maintained in relation to the role of the 'document humain'.

One effect of accentuating the narrator's omniscience is that Goncourt's texts vacillate between general and specific. This to-ing and fro-ing has implications as far as the mediation between Naturalism and Decadence is concerned, as can be illustrated by examples drawn from the 1882 novel. In chapter four of *La Faustin*, the doings of Juliette are largely eclipsed by the arguments of the narrator who deals essentially with histories of actresses and the transformation of actresses into stage roles. Interestingly, rather than recount Juliette Faustin's personal heritage and genealogy – little is mentioned of her upbringing or her family – the history of actresses as a type (or stereotype) is told. Underlying the novel is the understanding

[15] 'The Nature of Naturalism' in *Naturalism in the European Novel. New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Brian Nelson (New York and Oxford: Berg, 1992), pp. 13-26 (p. 15).
[16] '*La Fille Élisa*, ou comment tuer le romanesque', p. 196.

that all actresses, regardless of their personal circumstances, share common characteristics that force them into acting careers. There is a clear shift away from Naturalism, where biology, physiology and heredity contribute to diagnosis of the type, towards a much more coloured view of characters. Though the idea of the type is present in both Naturalist and Decadent literatures according to this analysis, its role has been transformed. No longer contributing to a social-Darwinian model of humanity, types instead serve to reinforce the narrator's misogynist beliefs, no matter how biased. In this manner the narrator's preconceptions are transformed into (pseudo?) scientific fact, even though the 'science' and the scientific analysis, most obvious in the form of inductive logic that identifies repeated patterns of behaviour, are missing. Edmond de Goncourt replaces Naturalist scientific justifications with simply stated ideas. The 'type' becomes a malady in itself, as specific cases are studied through the lens of preconceived ideas - often mere stereotypes or *fin-de-siècle* fantasies - rather than vice versa. Nowhere is this more true than in chapter ten of Goncourt's 1882 novel, where Juliette Faustin is presented as a representative example of 'the actress':

> Mais la phrase obséquieuse était dite [by Juliette] de la voix la plus rèche, et comme par une femme qui va égratigner. Il y a encore une particularité à noter chez les actrices, dans cette période de l'incubation d'un rôle, et surtout dans le labeur agaçant et contrariant des répétitions, elles sont comme enveloppées d'austérité, de froideur, d'insexualité (p. 60).

It is implied that because all actresses are plagued by duality - another being takes over as the role takes root in the actress - it follows that Juliette should be. Individual identity becomes hazy: Juliette is referred to as both 'l'Actrice' and 'La Faustin', but not by her given name. In the 1882 novel, narrator interventions, digressions and explanations come to stand in for plot. Furthermore, insofar as plot is spurned, and replaced by sensation in terms of both stylistics and thematics - the hyper-sensitive, nerve-wracked artist is a recurrent theme in the literature of the nineteenth century - the Decadent aesthetic is felt fully in Edmond de Goncourt's later novels.

All in all, narrator interventions function on two planes. They divide and paralyse the text by offering, sometimes over several chapters, examples better suited to non-fiction than fiction.

*****

The immobilising force of verb tense is a centrepiece of Edmond de Goncourt's novels. Oppositions between time and tense result in stasis, as does the elimination of the pseudo-scientific apparatus that organised Naturalist conceptions of humanity and literature. The presence of Naturalist theoretical framework against which the novels can be contextualised diminishes in Goncourt's later novels. Where once there was positivist, scientific doctrine, in later novels this is substituted on a thematic level with the narrator's fantasies. Clearly this challenges the assertions of Michel Raimond who believes that these sorts of modifications at the end of the nineteenth century did not apply to the novels of the Goncourts (he makes no distinction between joint and solo works): 'le lecteur était tiraillé entre deux registres différents: il entrait dans un agencement de circonstances particulières et de personnages singuliers; mais d'autre part, il s'en évadait au profit de la généralité des considérations ou de la subjectivité de l'auteur'.[17] The unravelling of the Naturalist framework, visible in terms of narration through the diminishing significance of, and subsequent dispersion of, events, as well as in the changing organisation of time and the authority that is placed in the narrator's voice, is a sign of the decomposition of a literary model. *La Fille Élisa*, *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin* and *Chérie* move towards the environment-less novel of psychological subjectivity and distraction, where outside events are of little or no relevance to the life of the character and, by extrapolation, the novel. This is perceptible in the founding Decadent text, *À*

[17] *La Crise du roman des lendemains du Naturalisme aux années vingt* (Paris : José Corti, 1966), pp. 179-80.

Rebours, where the protagonist has but extremely limited contact with the world outside the one he fabricates for himself, as in *La Faustin* and *Chérie*. The demotion of cause and effect driven plot leads eventually to novels that are pieced together from external sources, or made to appear as such, and whose cohesion stems from the very fact that they are fragmentary, to novels where progression through time is more a function of the reading process than plot development.

Chapter 4C
Language
Representations of Speech

Just as a shedding of Naturalist apparatuses is apparent in the diminishing intricacy of plot in Edmond de Goncourt's novels, so it is apparent on a thematic level in the textual representations of speech. In these four novels, direct discourse fails to unite characters with each other and with their environment. This has several thematic consequences, notably the sense of isolation and alienation that leads to the mental and physical decline of characters. Representations of speech also affect plot development by creating a semblance of non-action that immobilises the flow of the narratives. This immobility undermines transactional conceptions of language that posit it as an effective means of communication and representation.

Joint Novels

Jean de Palacio maintains that 'la communication entre les êtres demeure [...] le principal enjeu de l'oeuvre des Goncourt'.[1] While direct discourse has a central function in Goncourt's post-1870 novels, it is not for the same reason that it does pre-1870. Robert Ricatte, author of the seminal *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, terms the 1867 novel *Manette Salomon* a 'roman des idées' and speaks of its 'esthétique parlée', by which he understands that the Goncourt brothers' personal beliefs are expressed in the numerous spoken 'tirades' of the characters.[2] Characters are perceived by him as being the mouthpieces of the authors and, as a consequence, Ricatte is more interested in what is being discussed than in who is engaged in discussion. His content-centred analysis is evident in the following statement:

> L'offensive parlée semble se développer au hasard, alors qu'en fait elle définit avec rigueur les amours et les haines des Goncourt. Sa valeur romanesque

[1] 'Le Silence des Goncourt', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 259 (2000), 27-39 (p. 35).
[2] (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), pp. 353, 355 and 356.

> tient à son éclat apparent, à cet état de révolution permanente où semblent se fermenter les idées des personnages, de Chassagnol en particulier, grisé d'opium et d'art.[3]

In addition, Ricatte states that the Goncourts' preferred method for presenting dialogue in *Germinie Lacerteux* is in massive blocks, and he implies that this style is tried and true: 'Pour l'agencement du dialogue, les deux frères restaient d'ailleurs fidèles dans *Germinie* à la technique des blocs monolithiques'.[4]

With respect to the brothers' joint literary creations, critics are drawn by the prominence of dialogue. Eric Bordas affirms that 'on parle beaucoup dans les romans des Goncourt',[5] but this does not appear to be the case as far as Edmond de Goncourt's solo works are concerned, or at least not the case as far as Edmond de Goncourt's protagonists are concerned. Critic Marie-Thérèse Mathet has argued the opposite, however. Her view is that there is no evolution as far as dialogue in the Goncourt novels is concerned, there is always an abundance of talk. Following (almost too closely) in Ricatte's footsteps, Mathet argues that:

> Dans un roman des Goncourt, on est d'abord frappé par la présence massive du discours direct, si bien que la parole figurale s'offre au lecteur en d'immenses blocs monolithiques à l'instar des dialogues théatraux. Quelques oeuvres atteignent d'ailleurs des sommets dans la proportion de dialogue qu'elles présentent par rapport au récit, certains chapitres étant entièrement dialogués. On est alors tenté de songer à une "évolution" dans l'art du dialogue chez les Goncourt. Or il n'en est rien.[6]

While there may not be an evolution within the collective works, it is impossible not to talk in terms of difference when it comes to Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels.

---

[3] *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 355.
[4] *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 293.
[5] 'Interactions énonciatives dans *Charles Demailly*' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 209-23 (p. 209).
[6] 'La Parole des personnages dans l'oeuvre romanesque des frères Goncourt' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 237-45 (pp. 237-8).

From the point of view of dialogue, these texts are virtually silent. *La Faustin* is an exception - direct discourse dominates its first forty chapters (there are 64 in total) - accounted for by the fact that its subject, the theatre, is itself vocal. Some have argued that the reason for this apparent metamorphosis from spoken prolixity to relative silence stems from the fact that Jules, rather than Edmond, excelled at dialogue.[7] This is unverifiable. There is, however, a case for arguing that the repositioning is indicative of a move from 'classical' Realism, to a conception of literature that places less faith in mimetic representation and the ability of language to convey truth. This would correspond with Vivienne Mylne's assertion regarding the changing complexion of literary dialogue in the nineteenth century, namely that a marked confidence in verbal communication lasted only until the *fin-de-siècle*.[8]

Solo Novels

Direct discourse is present to a different degree and function in each of Edmond de Goncourt's novels, though there are similarities in its implementation, both on thematic and stylistic levels. Although *La Fille Élisa*'s follow-up, *Les Frères Zemganno*, is not as silent as its predecessor which portrays a woman condemned to silence, there are still only two passages of dialogue that involve neither of the two main characters. In chapter 53, the equestrian 'la' Tompkins and the circus director

---

[7] 'A voir Edmond s'essayer si maladroitement aux dialogues populaires de *Germinie*, on comprend qu'il ait si peu fait parler les personnages de *La Fille Élisa*. Mais cette maladresse et cette carence conduisent à penser que la collaboration fraternelle jouait en particulier dans ce domaine. Jules avait l'oreille plus fine et saisissait certainement mieux le ton des tirades populaires: se chargeait-il de les écrire à lui seul?' (*La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 293). This view is echoed by Marie-Claude Bayle who writes with reference to the 1884 novel: 'Dans *Chérie*, les personnages parlent très peu; en général, c'est l'auteur qui les raconte quand ils ne se racontent pas eux-mêmes sous forme de lettres ou de Journal intime. Ceci s'explique par le fait que c'était Jules qui possédait des qualités de dialogue qu'Edmond avoue ne pas avoir.' *'Chérie', d'Edmond de Goncourt* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1983), p. 61. Where Edmond admits this is not clear. Michael Youngs also touches on this question, commenting that 'the accepted view [is] that Jules wrote most of the dialogue'. 'The Style of the Goncourts in their Novels: Vocabulary and Imagery' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1964), p. 265. There are no genetic analyses that corroborate these statements, so Youngs is correct to qualify his remarks.

[8] *Le Dialogue dans le roman français de Sorel à Sarraute*, ed. by Françoise Tilkin (Paris: Universitas, 1994), p. 117.

converse; in chapter 66 various members of the public discuss the performers' impending jump. The majority of conversations involve only the two brothers. Gianni and Nello communicate with peripheral characters little, but they do communicate with each other. There are 11 exchanges between them, in addition to seven conversations involving Gianni and third parties (chapters 22, 23, 36, 43, 64, 72, and 75). Nello, the doomed brother, participates in no dialogues other than when speaking with his older brother, despite the fact that he is described as being 'loquace' while Gianni is said to 'parl[er] peu' (p. 53). Furthermore, the dispersion of dialogue changes as the clown brothers' search for artistic innovation is furthered. There is no extended dialogue in the first seventeen chapters of the 1879 novel (which has 86 in total) and the amount of dialogue increases once Nello is no longer able to perform.

Likewise, a similar phenomenon occurs in *La Faustin.* In the 1882 novel, the percentage of direct discourse drops dramatically once the protagonist is reunited with her lover, despite the fact that the opening scene of the novel features Juliette waxing lyrical about her time spent with William Rayne, Lord Annandale, and craving his return. The novel relies less and less on dialogue as the story advances. In this text there are lots of 'répliques', lots of short dialogues, and few extended conversations. This reduces the capacity of the lovers to interact verbally. To begin, there are many dialogues in the text. In chapter one, Juliette, her sister and two men converse. Many more are involved in the conversation in chapters two and three. Juliette and Annandale's final discussions, on the other hand, are monosyllabic and laconic on her part. In chapter 56 she responds firstly by silence and then by 'non'. In many respects, this portrayal of speech is marked with mimetic ambition. It is only realistic that the world of Parisian theatre should be verbal, just as it is only natural that remote chateaux in Europe should be more silent. In other ways, the representation of speech contributes to a fragmentation of the novel and is associated with the theme of hysteria and ruin.

It is in *Chérie*, where segmentation on a structural level is perhaps most apparent, that the differences in spoken aesthetic pre and post-1870 are felt most fully. In marked contrast to *La Faustin*, where the majority of chapters are dialogic, though the concentration of dialogue lessens as the *dénouement* nears, few of *Chérie*'s 105 chapters are devoted to the large monolithic chunks of dialogue to which Ricatte and Mathet refer. In those chapters that do contain a high proportion of dialogue, more often than not it is secondary characters - namely Mme Tony-Fréneuse, Chérie's chaperone; the Maréchal, Chérie's grandfather; and her friends - rather than the eponymous heroine, who speak. Indeed, Michael Youngs establishes that the heroine has but 172 lines of dialogue in the entire novel which has upwards of 3000 lines of text.[9] Her angry words in chapter seven finish as nothing more than 'une menace des lèvres dans une bouche aphone' (p. 46). Chapter 62, which depicts gossiping children, is two-thirds spoken, but the heroine herself is far from verbose (she says one sentence, comprising 5 out of 72 lines). Chapter 79 is also largely spoken (approximately 120 lines of dialogue for 345 lines of text), but much more space is given to descriptions of speech. The longest passages of dialogue in which the protagonist partakes can be qualified for the most part as gossip, which is to say that the locutions focus primarily on third parties and are not essential to the unveiling of plot (though they may add to the 'effet-de-réel'). In another case her voice is 'chantonnante et mécanique' (p. 94), showing a disaffection with communication.

Silence, Isolation, Alienation

In these novels silence contributes to the isolation, alienation, and madness of characters, but it also participates in the disruption of traditional narrative due to the implications of reproducing it textually. More often than not, speech is construed as an ineffective means of communication, and is linked to decline.

---

[9] 'The Style of the Goncourts in their Novels', p. 122.

La Fille Élisa is plagued by quiet, which is largely accounted for by its subject matter, silence and incarceration. The theme is itself revealing, however, dealing as it does with emptiness and the unsayable. In *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'*, the vital role of silence in the 1877 novel is summed up as such: 'Tout aboutit dans la première partie a une conséquence unique; tout dans la seconde, part d'une cause unique, le silence. Tous les aspects de l'avilissement d'Élisa en prison se ramènent à ce seul facteur'.[10] This raises a key point regarding direct discourse and dialogue in Edmond de Goncourt's novels. In the works dealing with women (as in *La Fille Élisa*, *La Faustin* and *Chérie*), though there is very little common ground between the characters' lives and backgrounds, the verbal is in one way or another intimately associated with mental disorder - even death - by the end of the novels.

Speech is a tool used to accentuate the psychological disorders of the female characters. Élisa speaks in 'phrases courtes et saccadées' (p. 21). The first dialogue in the novel results in 'une violente attaque de nerfs' (p. 54). Upon leaving the quiet, rural brothel she has the compulsive need to 's'étourdir de bruit, de tapage, de loquacité' (p. 72). While working in the prison's *Cordonnerie*, her final working-place, 'souvent, dans un coin, montait subitement à une bouche un flot de mots désordonnés' (p. 188). From this moment on, Élisa, who is surrounded by people who are forced into silence and whose words almost erupt to the surface, 'commença à descendre, peu à peu, tous les échelons de l'humanité qui mènent insensiblement une créature intelligente à l'animalité' (p. 190). 'La bête' (p. 163), Élisa, entertains no life with those around her, and instead lives in the dream world of her memory. On her death bed, the only part of her body that looks alive are her lips: 'la bouche seule encore vivante dans sa figure tendait vers la garde des lèvres enflées de paroles qui avaient à la fois envie et peur de sortir' (p. 199). Élisa dies before she finds the power to say anything. While *La Fille Élisa* may appear to be a quintessential Naturalist novel that studies cause and effect in the life of a prostitute, a sub-category of

[10] (Paris: PUF, 1960), p. 127.

literature at the time, the silence of the main character is a means of introducing a revolt against crude positivism. There is a similarity with *La Faustin*: there, too, the descent into hell of the main characters is a function of a loss of ability to believe in verbal communication.

The silence that is encountered openly in the 1877 novel is elaborated more subtly in Goncourt's ensuing novels. Chérie's mother, who is peculiarly deranged, wilfully goes mute after her husband's death. The end of *Chérie* is diametrically opposed to the end of *La Fille Élisa*. In chapters 103 and 104, Chérie speaks more than she does in all the rest of the novel, yet she terrifies her interlocutor. This outburst, like the one that tempts Élisa on her death bed, consolidates Chérie's physical decline into depravity and announces her imminent death. In these closing pages, Chérie's speech is nothing but the babble of a woman appearing in society for the last time. The subject of her babble is gossip regarding extra-marital affairs, and her appearance (she wants to appear 'vivant… ce soir encore', p. 328). In a particularly poignant aside she states that 'la maladie, la mort il faut […] cacher cela, lorsque l'on est une femme à la mode' (p. 332).

Although women are the primary interest in all but one of these novels, men are not completely immune from the troubles of speech. In *Les Frères Zemganno*, by the end of the novel, speech is unrestrained due to the emotion that it must convey: 'les pensées de [Gianni sur la douleur de Nello] se mettaient à parler tout haut, et devenaient en quelque sorte ces espèces de cris entrecoupés par lesquels ont besoin de jaillir d'une poitrine les grands et profonds chagrins' (p. 230). Interestingly, the character does not speak, his 'pensées' do, and not in words but in 'cris'. Speech is linked to the physical destruction of Gianni's brother and the failure to revolutionise acrobatics, but not to hysteria or lunacy. In *La Faustin*, on the other hand, Lord Annandale suffers the same impulses as Élisa. 'Par moments,' it is written, 'seulement sa bouche devenait bruissante de la sonorité de paroles avortées et brisées, qui

commençaient à s'échapper dans de confus éclats de voix' (p. 298). For him too the inability to communicate is a reflection of an ultimate mental degeneration, caused by a mysterious disease, the signs of which appear overnight. In every case, the characteristic symptom is that words are presented as issuing, not from the character as a subject, but from fragments of the body or of the fragmented soul of the character. Words exist and say something, but they do not express a person. Instead they signify division within the person.

Whereas in the final pages of *Les Frères Zemganno* and *Chérie* unbridled speech is a mark of decline, in *La Faustin*, like in *La Fille Élisa*, it is silence that marks the actress' demise. In the final chapters of *La Faustin*, Juliette is uncharacteristically silent. Her instability - expressed through an excessive and overbearing artistic drive, and attributed to her profession - is illustrated by her silent mimicry: 'la Faustin était despotiquement amenée à une imitation étudiée' (p. 306). In a normal acting situation, the actress would be verbal, here she relies on gestures. Meanwhile, the doctor who tries to explain her lover's illness to the actress speaks in broken sentences which convey, in a realistic manner, his shock and excitement at finding a case of 'agonie sardonique'. Juliette is transformed from a quintessentially verbal character - the actress who declaims other people's invented words in front of an audience nightly - to a semi-mute character when isolated in the countryside far from any potential spectator. The ivory tower scenario allows her only to act and mimic what is around her. Voice, here, has little to do with interaction and everything to do with expression (this will be examined in more detail in chapter 4 E). When isolated from the theatre, the actress loses the ability to communicate and the only language left to her is drama, which in her case is as much a matter of voice as it is of gesture. Juliette's reliance on drama is further attested to by her somnambulism in which she acts out a Racinian role. In situations that are not real, when dreaming, or interpreting invented lives, La Faustin speaks. Otherwise, she is predominantly silent. Even in her dreams Juliette is other, even her unconscious is permeated by her theatrical voice.

The focus on acting and artifice is central to the emerging doctrines of the modern era, where all language is a performance. Interestingly, one interpretation of Decadence is as the moment when the exchange value of language is repudiated in favour of the secret, hidden powers of words and other art forms. 'Le décadentisme', writes Pierre van Bever, 'c'est aussi le moment où, menacé dans son verbe même, le poète répudie la valeur d'échange du langage pour s'intéresser exclusivement à ses pouvoirs secrets'.[11] Juliette Faustin abandons communication altogether by the end of the novel and instead mimics her dying lover, from whom she is forever alienated.

Isolation is pervasive in Goncourt's novels and raises discursive problems, particularly in the representation of silence. Of particular interest are passages where speech is discussed but is not textually reproduced. In chapter 8 of *Chérie*, as in the example of the supposedly garrulous Nello, the reader encounters a curious passage that proclaims the protagonist verbose: 'parlant comme un beau diable, et disant des choses déraisonnables' (p. 48). As the reader is not shown an example of this devilish babble, the impression is given that there is a private realm of thought that is, and will remain, inaccessible. The absence (or failure) of direct discourse replaces the girl's loquacity. The reverse is true of *La Fille Élisa*, where the prostitute's voice is silenced as much by the narrator, as by the legal system. In this case also the heroine's inner thoughts remain largely hidden, maybe even suppressed. The 1877 novel is, in this respect, a very accurate representation of both the dangers and the aesthetic necessity of reducing people to silence: the author/narrator himself silences his characters in the same way that the law silences prisoners. This poetics of silence, as Jean de Palacio, theorist of Decadence, christens it, is encountered in all four novels. It is an example of 'la recherche, flaubertienne en effet, du 'livre sur rien', la constitution d'une poétique du silence, y compris dans des oeuvres apparemment naturalistes'.[12]

---

[11] 'Signification du "décadentisme"', *La Revue des langues vivantes*, 34 (1968), 366-72 (p. 367).
[12] 'Le Silence des Goncourt', p. 33.

On several occasions in *Chérie*, a one-sided structure prevents communication between characters. The reign of silence in Goncourt's novels is attested to by monologue masquerading as dialogue. When a governess, Lizadie, tells Chérie a story, the passage is more akin to soliloquy or monologue than exchange. In chapters 41 and 49, characters refuse to engage in conversation. In chapter 41, Chérie rejects the role of interlocutor outright by opting to remain silent. Textually, silence is reproduced through the intervention of the narrator and is gleaned from the words of the sole speaker. The chapter outlines in general terms the changes that take place in a girl's relationships with men. It posits that, from one moment to the next, young females become embarrassed by the presence of the male. In this episode, the voice of the typical man, through the voice of the narrator, is heard, but is not answered directly:

> -Eh bien, qu'est-ce que tu as? Tu ne me dis rien?
> On ne vous répond pas, on ne s'approche pas, on reste lointaine et tout embarrassée (p. 138).

This one-sided structure opposes a precise discourse with a general one. The male discourse dominates an unexpressed female discourse by reducing it to silence, by making the female an 'on' and not an 'elle'. This is a phenomenon that occurs regularly in the novels of George Sand, as Nigel Harkness has shown.[13] A charitable critic would perhaps account for this by invoking the diverse female voices that contributed to building the character 'Chérie'. Nonetheless, there is a clash between specific and general and, as a result, the passage can be classified as neither dialogue nor monologue.

[13] 'Gendered Discourse : Narrative Voices in the Novels of George Sand' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Edinburgh University, 1997). See particularly chapter 1.

Meanwhile, the same elocutionary structure is repeated in chapter 49, though this time a specific (attempted) conversation between grandfather and granddaughter takes place. Twice the maréchal addresses his granddaughter, twice his questions go unheeded. What is significant, in both cases, is that oral responses are replaced by descriptions in the guise of responses, silencing the transactional function of direct discourse in the text. At the same time, the maréchal's secretary attempts to engage the silent adolescent in conversation, but is forced to rely on the visual rather than the oral for responses to his questions: 'Chérie ne répondait pas, écoutait ironique, regardant son interlocuteur avec ce regard de sphinx de la femme, ce regard tout plein, à certaines heures, de choses énigmatiques qui ne se laissent pas lire' (p. 156). Her refusal to either act or speak is qualified by the narrator's reasoning. This thinking valorises *fin-de-siècle* stereotypes of women and echoes Baudelairian formulations of woman as a form of beauty to be avoided at all cost. To protect oneself from the temptations of woman was to silence her. Rather than explaining what the protagonist is thinking in her silence, the narrator languorously states what she looks like. This point of view is then taken up by the secretary himself, who is also obliged to read the visual.

> -Quels yeux!... Dites donc, il doit y avoir de drôles de pensées derrière ces yeux-là.
> -Oh! Je ne les dirai à personne! s'écria la jeune fille dans un mouvement de refermement de tout son être (pp. 156-7).

The visual, rather than the oral, is a means of communication in this scene – the secretary gets a response only when he reads Chérie's eyes. Curiously, the visual is also a barrier concealing the truth from both character and narrator. It is not until later the same evening, protected by a long descriptive paragraph, that Chérie's undeniably *fin-de-siècle* sadness is revealed by the use of one simple verb, 'je m'ennuie' (p. 157), a verb whose noun is often cited as one of the principal factors motivating *fin-de-siècle* creation.

As there is no exchange of information between the characters in these situations, the passages of direct discourse are not transactional; rather, they disclose the gulf separating the narrator's perspective and his heroine's silence. So, as in the case of *Madame Bovary*, the conversations are not 'active', to borrow Gothot-Mersch's formulation, 'elles n'ont rien d'actif. Elles ne constituent pas un véritable échange, une discussion menant à une décision (c'est-à-dire l'action)'.[14] Where the view of interpersonal contact as expressed in *Chérie*, *La Faustin*, and to a certain extent *Les Frères Zemganno*, differs from Flaubert's, for instance, is that Goncourt's protagonists are driven by a willingness to destroy communication and to speak instead through a more artistic and refined visual language. Emma Bovary, on the other hand, fails because she attempts to replace reality with a romanticised fiction, as the description of her as 'étant de tempérament plus sentimentale qu'artiste, cherchant des émotions et non des paysages' (p. 96) so fittingly indicates. Emma never ceases to believe in talk. This is precisely what Chérie and Goncourt's other hypersensitive and nervous artists want to avoid. The distance separating the two conceptions of escapism is the distance between bourgeois and rarefied, aristocratic aesthetics.

Isolating the heroine's voice within a descriptive framework - an oft-used tactic in Goncourt's novels - fragments the narrative. It is employed here to show the girl's lassitude and isolation. It is employed in *La Faustin* to show the breakdown of the lovers' relationship. It is employed in *La Fille Élisa* to show how distanced the prisoners are from their keepers. It is a strategy that has been commented upon in general terms by Sylvie Durrer, who sees it as part of a wider move toward a fracturing of narrative:

> Parmi les différentes formes de cisellement de l'interaction figure l'isolement d'une réplique au discours direct. La pratique de la réplique isolée s'inscrit

[14] 'Le Dialogue dans l'oeuvre de Flaubert', *Europe*, 485-487 (1969), 112-21 (p. 115).

> dans le travail de fragmentation, dont elle constitue une des manifestations les plus extrêmes, et semble se développer dès le XIXe siècle; auparavant, les écrivains ne procédaient pas à un tel fractionnement du dialogue.[15]

The rejection, or failure, of interactive discourse between characters is a central trait of Edmond de Goncourt's four novels. The inability, or disinclination, of characters to communicate effectively isolates them from their environment, or, alternatively, sequesters them within their silent environment. The fragmentation of discourse reflects the divided nature of the characters. In the case of Chérie, Juliette Faustin, and Gianni and Nello, the only expression left to them is refined aestheticism. Furthermore, the dearth of linguistic exchange means that the text cannot advance, or at least cannot advance in a conventional manner.

Constraints

The representation of silence coincides with the characters' downfall and isolation, and thwarts the advance of the narrative, yet there are other constraints on discourse in the novels. One of the principal areas exploited by dialogue and direct discourse is the conflict that opposes individual voice with the voice of authority, be it legal, artistic, linguistic or textual.

The first direct discourse presented in *La Fille Élisa* is highly codified. In the prologue, the eponymous prostitute protagonist is condemned to death by legal language which does not have the courage to name the crime it condemns and to which there is no right of reply. Élisa is convicted by the following words where individual and group are mixed: '"Sur mon honneur et ma conscience, devant Dieu et devant les hommes, la réponse du jury est: Oui, sur toutes les questions à la majorité"' (p. 7). Nor does this formulaic language adequately express the magnitude, on a human and emotional scale, of the chain of events that it puts into motion: 'Tout

[15] *Le Dialogue romanesque. Style et structure* (Geneva: Droz, 1994), p. 95.

condamné à mort aura la tête tranchée' (p. 9). This sort of 'réplique' supports Sylvie Durrer's claim that direct discourse creates narrative intrigue: 'les répliques sont, du point de vue narratif, comparables à des formes d'action'.[16] Paradoxically, however, the series of events announced by the jury is never set into motion, thanks to a beneficent intervention - an intervention which is not spoken and is only mentioned 36 chapters on when Élisa thinks to herself 'une cloche, qu'on avait baptisée, dans une paroisse, le curé qui avait demandé sa grâce' (p. 113). This, naturally, takes away from the power of these isolated 'répliques' to set into motion a course of events. The condemning 'répliques' are without response and are isolated from the main body of the text. Moreover, that which they do introduce is not made manifest until the second book. Words which lead to action - the priest's - have no place in the text. By not representing the priest's words, the transactional function of language is undermined, as it is by not carrying through with the jury's death sentence. Nonetheless, while Élisa is saved from having her head literally chopped off, she, like her saviour, is figuratively decapitated: she is condemned to perpetual silence. Similarly, in *Chérie*, on the one occasion that language is supposed to elicit a response, when Chérie sends a letter successfully inviting her friend to the opera, the letter is not reproduced for the reader.

Élisa's struggle to find a tongue is presented as doomed to fail from the outset of the novel because of the powerful strictures of legality. Immediately following the court's decision, the heroine is presented as choking on soundless words: 'la bouche tumultueuse de paroles qui s'étranglent' (p. 9). Here speech is not intimately linked to accelerating the plot; instead, the thematic focus of the novel - the way in which society maims its members by silencing them in the name of the law - is intensified. Thus, in addition to undermining the speech-action paradigm, direct discourse in the prologue to *La Fille Élisa* develops the theme of the discord between individual and society in terms of language. There is strain between the rule of the law, felt in the

[16] *Le Dialogue romanesque*, p. 8.

voice of society at large, and the individual who is crushed by its power and authority. Michael Macovski, whose interest in literary dialogue stems from an interest in the Romantic subject, particularly as manifested in poetry, positions the issue of voice and direct discourse within the context of larger cultural discourses. Belonging to the Bakhtinian school of thought which privileges notions of intertext and polyphony, Macovski conceives of textual voice as an 'ideolectal entity' and suggests that 'literary characters interact not only with individual voices but also with other discourses themselves - political, religious, and historical'.[17] Interpreted in this vein, Goncourt's characters could be considered as entertaining a dialogue with a Naturalist discourse, another *fin-de-siècle* discourse, or, indeed, in this case, with the law in general. *La Fille Élisa* is ostensibly a sustained rebuttal of the Auburn system of imprisonment, but on a more general note it offers a reading of the role of censors who silence authors, and who almost silenced this novel,[18] and a reading of the way in which language is controlled.

The control exerted on speech is felt in a different way in the 1879 work where the majority of dialogues deal with the trials of finding the perfect stunt. The dialogues are stumbling-blocks that have to be overcome before Gianni and Nello find a creative voice. The gymnast brothers, like Goncourt himself, are searching for an escape from socially-coded art. They are seeking to express a truth that is inexpressible within the constraints of their art form (similarly, for Élisa, everything is inexpressible within the confines of her prison). Several characteristics of the 1879 novel bear witness to the tension between conventional modes of communication and expression and aesthetic style (in acrobatics). The tension between these elements in *Les Frères Zemganno* is comparable to the tension that exists in 1880s literary France between popular Naturalism, which was rapidly becoming canonical, and the

[17] *Dialogue and Literature. Apostrophe, Auditions and the Collapse of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), pp. 3-4.
[18] The novel caused quite a furore. A spoof entitled *La Fille Élisabeth* called for its repression, but was itself repressed. During the examination of *La Fille Élisabeth*, Goncourt's novel was scrupulously studied but eventually approved.

aesthetic prerogatives of Decadence, which had yet to be consecrated by the public. Indeed, the similarities are representative of the dialogue that Macovski envisages between text and intertext.

The Zemgannos talk circles around their art. So inexpressible is it that it is not named in the novel, regardless of the fact that the majority of the dialogues between the brothers concentrate on this subject. Speech does not immediately lead to revelation. The first dialogue between the brothers, pertaining like the others to their aesthetic crusade, is a blueprint for all subsequent dialogues:

> -"Dis donc, Gianni, qu'est-ce que tu lui veux à cette chose?"
> -"Je cherche!"
> -"Qu'est-ce que tu cherches?"
> -"Ah! Voilà". Et Gianni ajoutait: -"Non, c'est le diable, je ne trouverai jamais!"
> -"Mais quoi donc? Dis, dis-moi-le, hein, dis-moi-le?" répétait Nello...
> -"Quand tu seras plus grand... tu ne comprendrais pas... Va, je cherche aussi pour toi frérot" (pp. 77-8).

The exchanges between the Zemgannos in the ensuing chapters (18, 24, 26, 34) develop the theme raised in this dialogue. All deal with artistic creation and most coincide with an impending geographical displacement. In this manner, dialogue is tied to action in a literal sense, for it is tied to the geographical movements of the characters. However, this geographical movement is not always synonymous with plot development. Indeed, action is stunted by the fact that no matter where the brothers are, or are going, in the first half of the novel, the same type of conversation takes place: they all deal with the trials of finding the perfect jump, 'ce tour cherché par Gianni, dès sa plus tendre jeunesse' (p. 152). In chapter 24, one chapter after the sale of the Bescapé family circus, the brothers' conversation imparts both the devotion of Nello to his sibling and the information that Gianni has projects in mind for the pair: 'j'ai en tête des projets pour nous deux' (p. 96). What these projects are is not revealed. In chapter 26, Gianni announces to his brother that they will depart

imminently for London where they will have the opportunity to revolutionise their art. Still, the exact nature of the discovery is not revealed. The dialogue in chapter 34 announces the Zemgannos' return to Paris but nevertheless conveys little about the nature of their new-found art.[19] To all intents and purposes, their art cannot be named in the text. The fact that the theme of their conversation remains the desire to find an act 'qui fasse de nous des gens célèbres' (p. 169) shows that dialogue does not necessarily mark a progression in the plot. Indeed, in this novel, the repetition of similar dialogues contributes to the theme of despair occasioned by the impossibility of revolutionising art.

The way in which the Zemgannos communicate verbally is not dictated by social rules, but the presence of constricting aesthetic conventions is nonetheless felt through the inability of the conversation, and by extension their art, to advance. However, due to the fact that by chapter 54 the brothers have unravelled the secret of their art, it might be assumed that some form of creative interaction has taken place. This is not the case, though. What advances are made are reached regardless, or in spite of, the brothers' conversations. After years of practice, they reach the desired height for their new act. In terms of plot development, there is no need for the acrobats to discuss at all. The repetition of the same subject in so many conversations accentuates at one and the same time the futility of the performers' search - will they ever pinpoint the centre of their art? - and the necessity of finding their own mode of expression - they must escape the rigidity and repetition present in their everyday life and art. The repetitiveness of their conversations reveals the obsessive nature of their ill-fated quest.

Several examples of direct discourse implicating one or more speakers show speech as being constrained by laws - be they societal, aesthetic or judicial - in the same

[19] '"Nos débuts là-bas, que veux-tu, ce sera moins flatteur... mais un jour... et c'est bien le diable, si ce jour n'arrive pas... alors on se rattrapera... Donne-moi encore un mois, six semaines... c'est tout ce que je te demande"' (p. 106).

manner that novelistic discourse is constrained by accepted narrative or generic forms. Discourse in the novel and novelistic discourse adhere to certain codes from which they struggle to escape. Goncourt's last heroine, Chérie, silences her friend in the opening scene of the novel for saying something deemed inappropriate - a curious position for a young girl to adopt. She also, as has been shown, isolates herself from her (present or absent) interlocutor. This isolation is mirrored in the novel by the fact that the passages of direct discourse do not further the plot: they do not create elements of suspense (the reader does not worry whether or not Chérie will learn her lesson, for instance), they do not purvey information to the reader other than the fact that the notion of genuine human interaction is illusory so long as conventional models are followed. (This is addressed in a later chapter, under the guise of 'Alternative Modes of Expression', where it is argued that the Zemgannos, Juliette Faustin and Chérie all attempt to find alternative forms of creative expression that do not depend on communicative conventions. The results are perversion and deluded idealism.) It is in *La Faustin* that direct discourse most obviously escapes from the constraints of traditional textual representation. Direct discourse can be used to establish relationships between characters and link them to their environment. Its rejection, whether deliberate - as is the case of Chérie - or imposed - as is the case of Élisa - results in isolation. This segregation, in turn, undermines the authority and reliability of language as a means of interactive communication.

Fragmentation

Some of the most extreme forms of the disruptive fracturing of direct discourse are found in *La Faustin*, where the words of several speakers, often unnamed, are gathered together. This strategy alienates characters and jeopardises the coherence of the traditional novel. Robert Ricatte argues that dialogue makes *Sœur Philomène* and *Renée Mauperin* almost theatrical by moments (in fact, *Renée* was subsequently

made into a play).[20] Equating novelistic discourse with theatrical dialogue has been explained by Claudine Gothot-Mersch, with regard to Flaubert, as a result of the influence of Romantic theatre, a point that would be worth pondering with regard to the Goncourts.[21] The issue of theatricality arises in relation to *La Faustin*, which, of Goncourt's novels, has the most in common with Romanticism on a thematic level. In the 1882 novel, certain dialogues are presented as though they form part of a dramatic script, thereby transforming them into performances in their own right and disrupting the stability of the novel as a form.

On one occasion in *La Faustin*, speakers are presented as the first, second, third (and so on) 'auteur dramatique' (pp. 79-80) and their words are presented as they would be in a play. On another, people are designated according to their role in *Phèdre*. A manic social life plays a considerable role in *La Faustin*, where, in chapter 17, after the actress's première as Phèdre, friends and acquaintances gather for dinner. The chapter, not quite 20 pages long, is by far the longest in the novel. Its first pages are narrated. Conversation begins when the meal is served, and positively erupts thereafter. Speakers are not identified by name but by tag, and this presentational method indicates that the form of the conversation is more important than who is speaking and what they are saying. Individual identities remain peripheral, spoken interventions are needed in order to paint an accurate picture of theatrical life. No contact is made between characters. An illustrious author interrupts 'le premier interlocuteur' (p. 134), and is later referred to himself as 'l'éloquent rabelaisien' (p. 135). The narrator sets the scene thus: 'Et la fin de la tirade de l'homme d'État sombrait dans une fusillade de courtes ripostes, partant à droite, à gauche, comme des coups de pistolet' (p. 135). From this point onward, many voices vie for the reader's attention, and there is not always one dominant theme to the conversation that ensues; nor is there always a logical connection between the 'répliques'. Jean-

[20] *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, p. 200.
[21] 'Le Dialogue dans l'oeuvre de Flaubert', p. 112.

Pierre Bertrand upholds that in this novel 'la narration se fige au profit de l'instantané. Au dialogue se substitue le collage de citations conversationnelles de la plus pure contingence'.[22] The degree to which this collage effect is employed in order to reinforce the theme of alienation should not be underestimated. Arguably, it is to escape the contingent nature of her surroundings that Juliette craves a settled life, or in other words, craves William Rayne's return.

The significance of the scene from the point of view of narrativity is just as great, for the dinner scene can also be interpreted from the perspective of the dissolution of representational stability. This is the angle that Jean de Palacio adopts when he states that 'une poétique de décadence substitue la confusion à la clarté, brise les cloisons étanches, compromet les frontières'. In this scene confusion reigns. The territory separating drama and novel is blurred and individual characters are confused in a mêlée of voices. Palacio argues that the boundaries that scenes like this disrupt are 'non seulement celles du tragique et du comique, mais, de façon plus fondamentale, celles du roman et du théâtre, de la prose et du vers, du texte et de l'image, de la parole et du silence, de l'Un et du Multiple'.[23] Clearly, the dinner scene, like the rehearsal scene, participates in this explosive aesthetic.

In Edmond de Goncourt's novels, the transactional function of direct discourse is limited by both the disjointed and cursory nature of some conversations and the impotence of others. The texts, like their characters, are plagued by disunity. Disjointed dialogue results in a disjointed narrative and a dissolution of unity, both in terms of plot and characterisation. It is also hyper-realistic as it proves the inadequacy of verbal language as a tool for communication. This is a theme cherished from the beginnings of Romanticism, through Flaubert who famously wrote of the inadequacy of 'la parole humaine' in *Madame Bovary*: 'la parole

[22] 'Notes à *La Faustin*' in Edmond de Goncourt, *La Faustin*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Bertrand (Arles: Actes Sud, 1995), pp. 283-300 (p. 296).
[23] *Figures et formes de la décadence* (Paris: Séguier, 1994), pp. 16-7.

humaine est comme un chaudron fêlé où nous battons des mélodies à faire danser les ours, quand on voudrait attendrir les étoiles' (p. 259). The position is fully developed in the *fin-de-siècle* and gains new impetus with the advent of postmodernism and the *nouveau roman*. Allied to this is the notion that accurate representation is no longer the concern or the aim of the artist, because language can never bridge the gap between signifier and signified, or, as the Decadents would have had it, the gap between possible art and ideal art.

****

From the standpoint of narrativity, the representations of speech in these four novels display a dwindling confidence in traditional modes of representation. Direct discourse is ineffective as a means of advancing plot, and is used to fragment the novels and undermine their formal stability. Discourse in the form of 'répliques' is presented in isolation and is not associated with novelistic action. Indeed, it seems that its sole function is in portraying silence. Silence is allied to, variously, madness, self-imposed refusal to engage in society, restrictions placed on human interaction, and the failure of language to name 'pure' art. Dialogue involving the two protagonists in *Les Frères Zemganno* is circuitous. Words cannot name their art, forcing the text into silence on the matter. In *La Faustin,* the character's double identity, and double voice - she is at one and the same time lover and actress - compete for supremacy and lead to a hyperactive creative impulse to the detriment of interpersonal communication. In *Chérie*, lack of contact with other characters has as its outcome death by madness, as words spew forth from the heroine unbidden and unrestricted. Élisa, because she has neither art nor words, has no right to reply, no right to communicate, and no means of expression. As a result, she dies. In each novel there is what Jean de Palacio has termed a 'faillite de la parole'.[24] Thematically, direct discourse is presented as a futile means of apprehending others. The

[24] *Figures et formes de la décadence*, p. 18.

inadequacies of speech are contrasted with alternative, more artistic and more individual forms of expression. Symbolists and Decadents view the novel as an inferior art form precisely because representation is one of its aims. Non-verbal arts are superior insofar as they do not rely on the exchange value of language, but these arts, as will be seen in chapter 4 E with respect to gymnastics, fashion and theatre, can themselves become sterile through their very abstractness.

Chapter 4D
Language
Vocabularies and *Vraisemblance*

The Goncourt brothers are well known to have had an interest in the finer points of the French language. Alain Hardy speculates that they were keen readers of Littré and their peer, Jules Lemaître, referred to them as 'amoureux des mots'.[1] This interest in words is reflected in the vocabulary of post-1870 novels where particular language issues are addressed both directly and allegorically through the use of specialised lexicons including foreign, technical, provincial, archaic, and invented words. Over the course of the novels, and even within the individual novels themselves, language vacillates between two seemingly contradictory conceptions: firstly, of language as a utilitarian tool; secondly, a more aesthetic conception of language where it is a device for expression of higher artistic truths. In this latter conception, words become gestures, or performances, as their particularities, in advancement of Decadent exaggeration, are emphasised and exalted.

Medical Language

Several different vocabularies are present in Goncourt's novels: colloquialisms and slang sit beside archaisms and technical words. In some places scientific and medical language is inserted into the texts to great mimetic effect. In others it bestows an aura of eccentricity on characters.

---

[1] Alain Hardy, 'Un secret des Goncourt?', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 41 (1971), 88-95. Jules Lemaître, *Les contemporains: études et portraits littéraires, troisième série* (Paris: Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie, n.d.), p. 41. For quantitative analyses of the vocabulary of the Goncourt brothers see Pierre Bourdat, 'Les Néologismes dans l'oeuvre des Goncourt', *Les Cahiers Goncourt*, 6 (1998), 18-47; Max Fuchs, *Lexique du 'Journal des Goncourt': contribution à l'histoire de la langue française pendant la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle* (Paris: É. Cornély, 1912); Chapters 13 and 6.3 - 'La Langue française' and 'Le Roman: l'impressionisme des Goncourt' - of L. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature francaise des origines à 1900*, 8 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1899), 3: *Dix-neuvième siècle, période contemporaine (1850-1900)*.

In *La Fille Élisa,* descriptions of the mid-wife's working quarters are peppered with vocabulary that reminds the reader of the nature of her work: there are references to 'Éclampsie' (p. 18), 'cataplasmes' (p. 26), and 'maladies de la moelle épinière' (p. 198). On the other hand, a face is described as a 'masque paralysé' (p. 199), a description which is both medical and poetic. Medical vocabulary (such as 'bandage dextriné' [p. 242], 'fracture *comminutive*' [p. 224] and 'solidification de l'articulation tibio-tarsienne' [p. 249]) explains an injury sustained by Nello in *Les Frères Zemganno*. Conversely, anatomical language is incessantly used in elaborate descriptions of gymnastic jumps and gymnastic training, and its repetition is incantatory. Some terms, such as 'tendons', 'fléchisseurs', 'extenseurs' (p. 86), 'une flexion oblique de la jambe' (p. 184), 'des courbatures des muscles sterno-pubien et dorso-acromien' (p. 184) are relatively mundane. Others are much more elaborate and poetic: 'saillies d'omoplates étranges' (p. 132), 'biceps, pectoraux, modelages de larges attaches nerveuses aux insertions profondes' (p. 23), 'la colonne vertébrale… qui projette la masse corporelle vers le ciel' (p. 190), 'gonflements, des dépressions défendues à une anatomie humaine' (p. 132). Children must be taught in the arts of gymnastics 'avant la soudure du squelette', Nello must 'fortifier les poignets et… habituer sa colonne vertébrale' (p. 55). On the other hand, the reference to Tompkins' 'colonne vertébrale britannique' (p. 194) (especially given her American nationality) seems an exaggerated reworking of more commonly accepted traits such as the 'stiff upper lip'.

In *La Faustin*, medical language is used almost uniquely in relation to the debauched characters. There is mention of 'sclérose systématique des cordons postérieurs de la moelle' and of a 'trémulation épileptoïde' (pp. 80-1). Someone suffers from an 'ataxie locomotrice' (p. 79). Selwyn, who is described as having a 'front hydrocéphale' (p. 273)), suffers from an 'influx nerveux de la moelle' (p. 275), Bonne-Ame from a 'fluxion de poitrine' (p. 21), an expression which is in reality, quite common. Elsewhere, there is a medical description of Annandale's condition, drawn, as noted

in chapter 3 C, from documentary sources: 'voyez-vous, madame, les jeux bizarres du muscle risorius et du grand zygomatique?' (p. 304). One eccentric character, a translator of Darwin, speaks in a 'conversation agrémentée de termes médicaux' (p. 9). Chérie's great-grandfather dies of a 'coup de sang' (p. 21), her grandmother is 'souffrante de la poitrine' (p. 30), yet though Chérie herself dies her deterioration is not described in medical terms, as Élisa's is. Her brush with 'scarlatine' is only of interest because of the frenzy of reading it inspires. Puberty is only of interest because of Chérie's fear of menstruation and the changes that it brings about to her personality, rather than her biological make-up. Bodily functions here are not described in terms that are overly technical.

Medical knowledge is integral to the representation of reality in the Naturalist novel, and contributes to the validity of the texts as scientific documents. These lexicons attest to the author's encyclopedic knowledge and grounding in science and root the narratives in a scientific, deterministic framework. In Edmond de Goncourt's novels, though, medical vocabulary progressively loses its place in the forefront and is by 1884 instead employed to paint eccentricities.

Specific Environments

In other instances, popular, colloquial and slang language dominates, particularly when members of a specific profession or group are presented. Nonetheless, not all characters associated with a group communicate in its language and this distinguishes them from their peers. Seldom do the main characters communicate in popular or colloquial language. When they do it is for effect. Likewise, in later novels there is less emphasis placed on accurately representing a given environment.

Popular vocabulary reflects the social status of the circus as a low form of art which is relegated to the boulevards; the language of midwifery in *La Fille Élisa* functions

in much the same way. In normal circumstances those who work in these environments communicate in this language and it is a mark of mimetic aims to reproduce these lexicons in the novel. Curiously, however, while brothers Gianni and Nello spend their entire existence surrounded by 'the people', they seldom utter words that could be considered popular. When they do, it is usually Gianni when speaking to Nello and then only after they have sold their family's travelling circus (there are exceptions, for instance when Gianni speaks to La Talochée before leaving the circus). In the chapter in which the two clowns sell the family show (chapter 22), Gianni uses colloquial terms such as 'bêta' (bête) (p. 101) and 'friser la cabriole' (p. 102) (which refers to a dance, but is used figuratively, as is shown in chapter 3 B, page 93). In contrast, the man to whom Gianni sells the travelling show speaks very colloquially:

> "Te voilà enfin!... prends une chaise et un verre, et asseois-toi là... Il est donc dans *le champ des navets*, le père Bescapé!... je l'aimais ce vieux singe... ça m'aurait fait plaisir de *concourir à sa cérémonie*... Ah! Pour un qui avait du vice, c'en était un celui-là... et comme le mâtin jouait de *l'attrape-nigaud*... Jeune homme, c'est moi, le Recousu, qui te le dis: tu as eu là un *chouette papa*... et on n'en refera plus... *la mère des humains* comme *ceusse-là* a fini d'accoucher... Bois, cochon... Et qu'est-ce que tu veux de toute ta *landière*?" (p. 89).

The italics mark the popularisms out as different. Le Recousu utters more popularisms in this one episode than Gianni does in the entire novel,[2] even though they live and work in the same environment. The fact that Gianni does not speak in overly popular language signals his artistic superiority, suggests that even if Gianni is not an aristocrat by birth, he is one by taste.

The Zemgannos' relatively restricted use of popular and colloquial language is in contrast with the eponymous heroine of *La Fille Élisa*, who uses, in one conversation

[2] Michael Youngs states in 'The Style of the Goncourts in their Novels' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1964) that in '109 lines of dialogue [le Recousu] uses one less colloquial expression than the two brothers together in 534 lines' (p. 119).

(which is not presented in direct discourse), several words which can be deemed popular. Evidently, this register is a reflection of her environment: Élisa, a prostitute, is the child of a midwife from an impoverished Parisian neighbourhood. In the following excerpt, the italics and ellipses are in the original, and offer an example of the way in which certain lexical elements of language are highlighted in the texts, making them a spectacle to be beheld by the reader:

> Elle avait plein le dos de l'existence avec sa mère... l'ouvrage du bazar était trop *abîmant*... elle ne voulait pas devenir une *tire-enfants*... voici bien des semaines qu'elle l'attendait... c'était fini, elle avait pris son parti de *donner dans le travers*... elle allait partir avec elle [a brothel owner]... si elle ne l'emmenait pas, ... elle entrerait dans une maison de Paris, la première venue... s'entendre avec sa mère, c'était vouloir *débarbouiller un mort*... Elle se sentait par moments la tête *évaporée* (p. 21).

Not all characters use this language. A farm hand in Lorraine, where Élisa first enters a brothel, uses language that is less crass but more colourful and poetic, describing an out-of-breath and panting horse on a cold morning by saying 'il fume comme le cuveau de votre lessive' (p. 25). Élisa's mother, on the other hand, employs almost exclusively popular language, referring to her daughter as 'bernoque' (p. 15), using the term 'sortir un saint de ses gonds' (p. 17) with regard to her daughter refusing to become a midwife, and, finally, when visiting Élisa in prison, addressing her sister as a 'nigaude' (p. 160) and exclaiming 'sacré polisson de salopiat de singe' (p. 12), 'mais, vraiment, t'as bonne figure, oh! Mais c'est chouette, t'as trouvé le moyen d'engraisser tout plein' (p. 160). None of this is out of place for a woman of the people and the language accurately conveys her social status as well as the author's mastery of his subject.

La Fille Élisa and *Les Frères Zemganno* make use of vocabulary particular to the environment they portray. In *La Fille Élisa*, the prostitute, the 'fille crottée' (p. 85), the 'femmes *en cartes*' (p. 26), is shown 'battant son quart' (p. 68), passing 'devant la

glace' (p. 103), in order to 'faire son heure' (p. 65).[3] A distinction is made between Parisian and provincial brothels; yet, the former is described with the vocabulary of the latter: 'cette chambre, appelée le *poulailler*', 'enfin trois heures... trois heures et le *merlan*. Au *yaulement* de l'artiste capillaire dans l'escalier' (p. 63). The reader is given a virtual guided tour of prison life. The waiting room (chaps 35 and 36), the courtyard (chap 38), the cafeteria (chaps 55), the work rooms (chaps 39), and dormitories (chap 37, and 43) are all described, but in artistic terms that accentuate light, space and restriction and instil an unexpected beauty on the scene: 'le carreau du réfectoire encore un peu humide du lavage du matin luisait rouge, et la lumière aigre d'une froide journée de printemps jouait crûment sur l'ocre frais des murailles et le blanc de chaux du plafond, tout récemment repeints' (p. 171). The 'parloir', in *La Fille Élisa*, on the other hand, the one place in the prison where detainees are able to speak, is described in chapter 51 in less affective, more detached, terms: 'le parloir d'une maison centrale se compose de trois cages ou plutôt de trois grands garde-manger grillagés de fer et soudé l'un à l'autre' (p. 159). There is a clear difference in emphasis away from artistic description to more matter-of-fact description, suggesting perhaps that this particular location is completely devoid of poetry and beauty.

The use of specialised vocabulary seems in the first instance to be above all for utilitarian purposes, that is, in order to establish a sense of *vraisemblance*. It is not so clear-cut, however, as there are words that belong to more than one lexicon. In *Les Frères Zemganno*, in accordance with the thematic axis around which the novel revolves, circus language dominates, and the reader is presented with 'rings' (p. 109), 'vomitoire' (p. 142), 'travail par terre' and 'travail en l'air' (p. 148), and more 'sauts' than can be counted ('de carpe', 'de poltron', d'ivrogne', 'du singe', 'en profondeur', 'suspension horizontale en avant', 'en arrière', 'de l'Arabe', 'avec élan or à pieds joints'

[3] Alexandre Dumas discusses the vocabulary of prostitution in *Filles, lorettes et courtisanes* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000 [1843]) pp. 25-9.

to name but a few). 'Un Hercule' (p. 212), however, refers to the mythological demi-god, but also has a precise meaning in the circus as a heavyweight who performs certain functions. This sort of specialised terminology demonstrates that it is very difficult for the critic to classify and categorise language and it is clear that it creates instability on the level of meaning.

The descriptions of the theatre in *La Faustin* are in many ways similar to the descriptions of the prison in *La Fille Élisa*, accentuating as they do the artistic qualities of the scene. Balconies, statues, and scaffolding are all described in terms of light and shadow, for example 'un peu de pâleur blême sur les cariatides des avants-scènes' (p. 56), 'dans les frises et les trouées des échafaudages' (p. 56). Noticeably absent from the novel are more disinterested depictions. Towards the end, vocabulary verges on the Gothic, and the castle is described as a 'monde vilainement fantastique' (p. 290). In addition, much like Goncourt's other characters, Juliette does not express herself in the popular or slang language of her peers. While others use expressions such as 'tu steppes' (p. 79), 'tu nous courbatures l'entendement' (p. 14) (a very inventive and refined formulation), 'je suis d'attaque' (p. 26) (meaning 'I am ready'), 'un peu de vigousse' (p. 60), Juliette has none of it and instead it is specified that 'elle écrivait comme une femme du siècle passé' (p. 206), 'corrigeant un mot ou un goût canaille' (p. 205). There is a distance separating La Faustin from her environment. As with the Zemgannos, she is elevated above her milieu by her artistic, or at least linguistic, aristocracy.

Goncourt's final novel draws on the vocabulary of flora, fashion, dress and design (chaps 53 and 54), perfume, balls and hairstyles. In *Chérie*, linguistic peculiarities and popularisms are committed either by those who surround the main character or by the narrator, not by the girl herself. For example, Mme Tony-Fréneuse, who occupies an equal, if not higher, social position than the heroine uses a quarter of the

colloquialisms to Chérie's eight percent, according to Michael Youngs' calculations.[4] No matter the language of their milieux, the characters in Edmond de Goncourt's novels speak it differently. This instability can undermine the mimetic authority of the text and can also be seen as the main characters' refusal to participate in a futile process of socialisation.

Archaisms

Despite its realist function, specialised vocabulary can prove inaccessible to the general public and can undermine the mimetic authority of a text. This is particularly true of the use of archaic words. Thematically, the use of archaic words isolates Goncourt's characters from their environment; stylistically, their presence alienates the reading public, possibly an end in itself, while proclaiming the author's ingenuity.

The issue is particularly pronounced in *Les Frères Zemganno*. If Gianni and Nello are not entirely fluent in popular language - or as fluent as Élisa - they are, on the other hand, fluent in the historical vocabulary of gymnastics, as is shown in chapter 46 of the novel. In this chapter, Gianni reads passages of a treatise (which was, incidentally, the first book to be written on gymnastics) called *Trois Dialogues de l'exercice de sauter et de voltiger par Arcangelo Tuccaro 1599* to his brother (this is also an example of the documentation used to write the novel, as seen in 3 B). The Zemganno brothers' goal is to modernise and to better some of the *tours* outlined in this manual dedicated to François 1er. In so doing, the acrobatic archaisms and stunts of yesteryear will be infused with new life and transplanted into the modern era.

[4] 'The Style of the Goncourts in their Novels', p. 122.

Significantly, it is not only the acrobatic routines that are archaic. The language used to describe routines is also ancient.[5] Many of the words are common to the sixteenth century, such as '*adextre*' (p. 160), '*gélinier*' (p. 160), and '*glicement*' (p. 161). The words '*saltarine*' and '*saltatoire*' (p. 160) are drawn from the sixteenth-century ('saltation'). In Roman times 'saltation' was a spectacle which mixed dance, theatre, and pantomime and, as such, is appropriate to Gianni and Nello's art. Max Fuchs lists 'saltateur' in his study of the *Journal* under the heading 'savant' and indicates that it appears mostly in the second part of the text, written by Edmond de Goncourt.[6] These two jumping-related, or leaping-related, words are particularly revealing in terms of the divide between the utilitarian and aesthetic functions of language because the simple word '*sauter*' from the title of the book - '*l'exercice de sauter*' - could have been taken up by Goncourt. Instead, words which in the nineteenth century were based on archaic roots, but which even in the sixteenth century refer further into the past, are chosen. Though the mix of dance, theatre and pantomime does correspond to the Zemgannos' art, it also refers to a more refined past, of which the average reader may be unaware.

Another example of this double step into the past in *Les Frères Zemganno* are certain jumps, called '*sauts épheristique*', '*orchestique*' and '*cubistique*' (p. 160). 'Orchest[r]ique' and 'cubistique' are both words from Greek Antiquity which denote gymnastic-like dances performed by the Bacchantes. This cross-cultural borrowing is itself a characteristic of *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature which perceived many parallels between nineteenth-century France and the rise and decline of the Roman Empire.[7] In this case, however, the use of words drawn from an ancient context is doubly significant due to the fact that the Bacchantes were arguably the first to bear

[5] According to Youngs' tables, out of a total twenty-three archaisms in Edmond de Goncourt's four novels, a not inconsiderable number, ten, are in *Les Frères Zemganno*. They are: 'absconce', 'adextre', 'blanque', 'enfantelet', 'gélinier', 'glicement', 'saltarine', 'saltatoire', 'tourneboulant'.
[6] *Le Lexique du 'Journal des Goncourt'*, p. xxv.
[7] Koenraad Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 7.

the title 'Decadent'. The Zemgannos' link to this tradition is not entirely clear, however, for it is confusingly specified that Gianni and Nello sustain a 'privation "de Bacchus et de Vénus": tradition venant en droite ligne... des artistes du muscle de l'antiquité" (pp. 170-1), while performing jumps related to Bacchus. The gymnasts must deprive themselves of physical pleasure. This total abstinence may, in fact, be closely associated to the total indulgence of the Bacchantes. So it is that language which is, for all appearances, chosen for its capacity to represent reality, in fact destabilises mimetic representation by vacillating between nineteenth-century arts and much more ancient ones and having meanings that contradict statements in the text.

The language of Arcangelo Tuccaro belongs to an era which has passed. The book is read by the brothers, but the archaisms remain, in a sense, a sort of private or secret language shared by them alone. None of the other circus performers dabble in secret languages. Indeed, apart from the 'Penseur' (p. 150) who laments the sorry state of European circuses compared with American ones, the other performers are laconic. '"Ma place," faisait le pitre' (p. 12) is an example of this tendency, as is '"De la terre", fit-elle en frappant ses deux mains' (p. 12). Certainly, in terms of the reading public, not all readers would have been familiar with the elaborate vocabulary that provides a dose of strangeness in the novel. A gulf separates the language of the Zemgannos and the language of their peers and a gulf separates the mimetic aims of the language and the linguistic disorientation that results from its use.

Juliette Faustin also turns to the past in order to uncover lost artistic genius. She seeks Racine's ancient source, Euripides, as a means of better interpreting *Phèdre*, while all the while using popular expressions and word games.[8] This language is reproduced in the novel, where it is also explained how the ancient and modern

[8] Mireille Dottin-Orsini discusses popular language in *La Faustin* in 'Les Frères Goncourt et le "roman des actrices"', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 259 (2000), 55-74, (pp. 58, 62 and 66).

conceptions of Phèdre differ ('cette figure de fatalité bien autrement grande, bien autrement humaine, bien autrement *nature* dans son ressentiment amoureux, que la femme conventionnelle et théâtralement *sympathique*, peinte par le poète de la cour de Louis XIV', p. 40). This tactic is unsuccessful as the ancient interpretation distances her from her emotional self. After the first performance of *Phèdre*, Juliette seeks more advice. Another character in *La Faustin*, Ragache, who is 'toujours impassible et sérieux', uses archaic words to the annoyance of others: '*Stupendum*! ainsi que s'exprime l'antiquité' (p. 17); he refers to his friend Carsonac as 'très illustre *carcassier*' (p. 17). One person wears a 'chlamyde', a Greek jacket adopted by the Romans, another is referred to by the archaic term for a fencer, 'spadassin' (p. 110).

The past and its lexicon play an important role in these two novels insofar as they appear to link the artistically–minded characters with their (hidden?) creative heritage. Brilliant aesthetic modernisation is presented as impossible without the benefit of past knowledge and vocabulary. Transposed into the nineteenth century and into literature, this could be read as a rejection of the brash modernity of Naturalism, with what some would consider its faith in progress and its mimetic reproduction of the working-classes and other unrefined subjects. The Zemganno brothers turn their backs on modernity and return to older, more refined and established aesthetic values. As the actual exercises described in Tuccaro's book are no longer performed in Gianni and Nello's era, it is through the medium of language that they must rediscover their gymnastic roots. They are elitists alienated in the world of popular arts. In much the same way, Edmond de Goncourt is an elitist who alienates his readers through complex language at a time when the novel, and Naturalism, was reaching its widest public ever, and when the novel was increasingly seen to be 'littérature commerciale'.[9]

[9] Christophe Charle, *La Crise littéraire à l'époque du naturalisme: roman, théâtre et politique; essai d'histoire sociale des groupes et genres littéraires* (Paris: Presses de l'École normale supérieure, 1979), p. 63.

The emphasis on the past signals a more general *retour-en-arrière* where artists are fascinated by the creations of their predecessors. Many authors of the period turned to the literature of the Romans, of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance, to anything that was not mass produced or, *in extremis*, from the current century, for inspiration. The most exceptional instance of turning to the past is Péladan's 15 volume *La Décadence latine* (1884-1900). A more immediately pertinent example of a fascination with older literatures and cultures is found in Huysmans' *À Rebours* where the main character, des Esseintes, outlines his preferred reading in two separate chapters. His canon is revealing because it includes not only Roman and medieval authors, but Goncourt himself, with pride of place given to *La Faustin* (in chapter 14).

The fact that this archaic language is not spoken in modern circles and is, therefore, not communal, means that the artists are working in isolation. Perhaps, then, when the reader is told, for example, that some of the exercises that the acrobats recreate appear to be the result of 'un pacte diabolique' (p. 160), presumably figurative, it is a warning of the Faustian nature of all artistic enterprises that distance artists from their immediate surroundings in an attempt to identify higher aesthetic truths. Higher aesthetic truths are forever unattainable - the artist cannot live in isolation without being overcome with creative sterility, expressed in the inability to complete projects, to renew art, and to engage with their environment. Yet here, outright sterility is prevented by outside intervention (for example, the arrival of Tompkins and William Rayne's return). The desire to portray an environment accurately using the language drawn from it backfires. The utilitarian function of the specialised archaic vocabulary is in opposition to the distancing effect that this rarefied vocabulary produces, both on the reader and on the character. On the other hand, the author's obtrusive erudition is another facet of the generally intrusive nature of the authorial voice in these works.

Neologisms

An equivalent linguistic instability is caused by the presence of neologisms. Neologisms are a clear example of the manner by which an author seeks to find the 'mot juste' – the new word being created when no existing word proves satisfactory. Words are created to fill specific lexical gaps between language and that which it represents. This very precision, however, can undermine the mimetic function of neology due to the fact that words can be too precise, too obscure, too precious. Indeed, the meaning of a word could be hidden from all apart from its creator.

The extent to which a word is a neologism should not be ignored here and it is a question raised by Petit de Julleville where it is aptly stated:

> Seulement, il faut bien distinguer entre les mots qu'on entasse pour donner au récit ou au drame la couleur locale – les archaïsmes jouent là le role que jouent ailleurs les mots turcs ou anglais ou patois, - et les mots qu'on se propose réellement de rendre à la langue.[10]

Michael Youngs identifies two outright - or absolute - neologisms in *La Fille Élisa* as does Pierre Bourdat. Both critics cite 'yaulement' (p. 63) as a new word, but Bourdat specifies that it is in actuality taken from the Lorraine dialect, thus complicating the definition of neologism. Bourdat's evaluation is based on a particularly limited definition, one where changes in grammatical category of a word do not constitute neology. Even so, the comparatively restricted number of new words in *La Fille Élisa*, according to available data, suggests that it is a transition novel. Arguably, the reason that *La Fille Élisa* is not propitious to breeding neologisms is that the novel has a social agenda. It is dealing with actual events and is therefore hardly suited to lexical games and trickery. The 1877 novel is deliberately addressed to a wide public rather than a small number of aesthetes.

---

[10] *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, 8 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1899), 3: *Dix-neuvième siècle, période contemporaine (1850-1900)*, p. 741.

In *Les Frères Zemganno*, there are somewhere between 15 and 61 neologisms, depending on how the term is defined. 15 were counted by Bourdat who holds that a neologism must be an absolutely new creation. For example, musicant – 'ce dialogue *musicant*' (p. 158), or mortuairement – 'quelque chose de *mortuairement* funambulesque' (pp. 112-13), or satinement – 'les *satinements* de leurs croupes' (p. 180). On the other hand, 61 neologisms were found by Youngs who believes that a change in grammatical category of a word - for example using a verb as a noun - makes it a neologism.[11] Either way, in terms of linguistic comprehension, changes in grammatical category create uncertainty and present formidable interpretative tasks. It should also be kept in mind that it is far from abnormal for words which were created in the Goncourt *Journal* to resurface in the novels.

It has long been held that the novels of the Goncourt Brothers were replete with neology, but the research of Pierre Bourdat suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Bourdat identifies a relatively restricted number of new words in the joint novels of the Goncourt brothers (as opposed to the *Journal*), and explains this result by pointing to the type of novel the brothers were writing:

> Qu'on ne s'attende pas non plus à en ramasser à foison dans les romans, leur facture naturaliste conduisant les auteurs à employer la langue de tous les jours... quatre dans *Germinie*, deux dans *La Fille Élisa*, un seul… dans *Renée Maupérin*. Un peu moins d'une dizaine dans chacune des quatre oeuvres romanesques.[12]

Naturalism, this statement contends, deals with describing what exists in the language of the thing being described. The world is classifiable using a pre-

[11] 'Les Néologismes dans l'oeuvre des Goncourt', 18-47; 'The Style of the Goncourts in their Novels', pp. 41-97. A list of neologisms is also included in Petit de Julleville's study of the language of the Goncourt brothers, p. 777.

[12] 'Les Néologismes dans l'oeuvre des Goncourt', p. 19. Alexis François also argues that there are fewer neologisms in the novels than in the *Journal*. *Histoire de la langue française cultivée des origines à nos jours*, 2 vols (Geneva: Alexandre Jullien, 1959) 2, p. 219.

established vocabulary and there is, therefore, no need to invent new words. Bourdat's conclusions may simply be a reflection of the fact that the *Journal* is a prime source of 'documents humains' for the novels. Though neologisms may not blossom in Edmond de Goncourt's four novels according to this research (and Bourdat leaves *Chérie* out of his study), it is the sheer mix and range of language that stupefies the reader and distends the narratives. For while neologisms, following *La Fille Élisa*, return to the same frequency as the pre-1870 novels, the number of archaisms is on the rise according to Youngs' research.[13] The increase in use of archaisms may well be due to the use of the 'document humain' (each of the final three novels takes place in the past or makes explicit reference to it). In any event, it is the fusion of so may different lexicons and registers that results in interpretative instability.

This overview of some of the lexical issues raised in Goncourt's novels is related to more general questions regarding language and lexical usage in the late nineteenth-century novel. Early twentieth-century critic Marcel Cressot, a Huysmans specialist, considers that vocabulary is a tool exploited by authors of the period to widen the gap between common man and an elite. Cressot argues that:

> Dès les Goncourt, la préciosité ou, si l'on préfère sa forme moderne, le 'snobisme', fait son entrée dans le roman. Tout en utilisant les ressources de la langue familière, tout en faisant feu de tout bois, l'homme de lettres est convaincu que le trait spécifique qui le distingue du vulgaire, ce doit être une langue fleurie de mots rares, de mots 'inouis'. Certes, on ne craindra pas d'offusquer le bourgeois par l'emploi d'un mot bas, mais plus volontiers encore on l'abasoudira par des mots rares, des mots qui exigeront, pour être compris, de la méditation, et même de la manipulation de dictionnaires techniques.[14]

---

[13] Youngs counts a total of 40 distributed thus in Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels: 1 in *La Fille Élisa*, 10 in *Les Frères Zemganno*, 7 in *La Faustin*, 6 in *Chérie*. Charles Bruneau states that archaisms are not used at all in the Goncourt *Journal*. Brunot, Ferdinand, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), 13: Charles Bruneau, *L'Époque réaliste, deuxième partie: la prose littéraire*, p. 74.

[14] *La Phrase et le vocabulaire de J-K Huysmans: contribution à l'histoire de la langue française pendant le dernier quart du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Droz, 1938), p. 6.

It is not difficult to perceive how this use of specialised vocabulary differs enormously from that of the encyclopedic Balzac, for instance, whose aim was not to dazzle his readers, but to give a faithful representation of various social groupings using their lexicons. Likewise, George Sand made extensive use of patois in some of her more rural novels, and Zola was criticised for using too much popular language, but not in a fashion that could be considered mannerist or precious. On a more general note, just as Goncourt's characters have to contend with the popular and elite branches of art, so novels from this era must contend with the tensions existing between the dominant and commercially successful literature of Naturalism and more individualistic novels which display symptoms of the theory of art for art's sake, where language and aesthetics are ends in themselves, and where literature is infused with snobbery. In both forms of literature, vocabulary has a specific, not wholly unsimilar, role to play. This topic is addressed by author, linguist and critic Rémy de Gourmont, who comments on the debt post-Naturalist writing owes to Naturalism in Jules Huret's *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire*, a collection of interviews of literary figures carried out at the end of the nineteenth century:

> L'observation exacte est indispensable à la refabrication artistique de la vie. Même pour une figure de rêve pur, un peintre est tenu à respecter l'anatomie, à ne pas faire divaguer les lignes, à ne pas plaquer d'impossibles couleurs, à ne pas s'abandonner à des perspectives chinoises... Ce besoin de l'exactitude, le naturalisme nous l'a mis dans le sang: tels son role et son bienfait.[15]

The desire for suitable language referred to by Gourmont is apparent in each of Goncourt's novels in another aspect as well, and a fine example is found in *Chérie* where the young girl's friends are introduced. In the depiction of the characters, the narrator takes care to describe how the children speak, both in terms of vocabulary and style. In particular, one child's mannerism – she suffixes words with *mar* - is described the text:

[15] (Paris: Charpentier, 1891), p. 137.

> Une langue excessive aussi, que celle de cette colossale enfant. Elle dénaturait tous les mots de son vocabulaire affectionnée par l'adjonction de la terminaison en mar: chicmar, chouettemar, et ces étranges pénultièmes étaient entremêlées de 'A Chaillot! Va t'asseoir!' et suivies du dévidage de locutions drôlatiques pas du tout jeune fille (p. 213).

The narrator is well aware of the manner in which specific lexical traits are attached to certain characters, belying a consciousness of how speech and vocabulary define a person. The humorous overtones of this tactic should not be ignored. It is quite possible that Goncourt is mocking the creation of new words for its own sake, mocking neology that serves no purpose other than affectation and fails to fill a lexical lacuna. By all accounts, the texts verge towards mannerist and Decadent stylistics while subverting these aims by apparently deriding them.

The way to renew 'ordinary' language - at least according to these novels - is to make it less utilitarian. This is done by making language more precise, even if this very precision seems contradictory and can lead to confusion. There is an unspoken prioritisation of refined and complicated stylistic needs over linguistic comprehension. Insofar as this is the case, neology has a role to play in the dialogue between the Naturalist and Decadent conceptions of language and literature, as the systematic invention of new words almost certainly appeals to a particularly refined or educated audience.

Foreign Vocabulary

Foreign vocabulary also contributes to a sense of alienation and to the collapse of meaning in Goncourt's novels. The use of foreign words in the novels can be explained quite easily by the fact that the characters come into contact with foreigners. But, the inclusion of these words is not quite so unproblematic as this

explanation would suggest and is perhaps more related to the educated narrator's intrusions into the text.

In terms of accuracy of representation, where foreign characters or places are concerned, there is no more realist way to let them speak than through their own language and there is no more realist manner of description than to describe their world in its language. Correspondingly, there is no foreign vocabulary in *La Fille Élisa*. 'Plus on a le désir de la vérité rigoureuse,' writes Petit de Julleville, 'moins on se sent en droit de traduire le mot original, carthaginois, russe, faubourien, qui note un détail caractéristique, et qui est sans équivalent. Il n'y a donc qu'à le prendre'.[16] Unfortunately, this poses problems of comprehension for the speaker of the primary language of the text. The need to understand foreign words in these texts is, however, minimal, as is illustrated by examples from both *La Faustin* and *Chérie*, in relation to the arts.

In order to better portray Phèdre, Juliette Faustin visits the Greek sage Athanassiadis. There the actress is read Euripides' Greek version of the play, *Hippolytus*, and, crucially, Greek is not a language she understands (nor is it a language in which Goncourt is fluent). The actress tells him:

> Je suis curieuse de vous entendre lire de cette *Phèdre* dans l'original... Ça éveillera peut-être des idées chez moi... Voilà... Je voudrais revenir de chez vous, comme une Barbare d'autrefois... qui aurait passé deux heures dans la Grèce de Périclès... et avec un peu du bruit de la langue dans mon oreille (p. 34).

These foreign words do not alienate Juliette from the play, on the contrary they bring her closer to the core of Phèdre's being. Feeling is more important than linguistic comprehension, though the reading over, Athanassiadis offers his view of the role ('le

[16] *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature francaise des origines à 1900*, 8 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1899), 3: *Dix-neuvième siècle, période contemporaine (1850-1900)*, p. 767.

commentateur donnait à la tragédienne moderne, la tentation d'accents nouveaux à introduire dans le rôle rajeuni, renouvelé, compris historiquement', pp. 40-1). In much the same manner, in the closing scenes of the 1884 novel, the protagonist listens, enraptured, to *Lucia di Lammermoor* 'à travers une succession de demi-évanouissements' (p. 333). The exact words – 'T'amo ingrata, t'amo ancor' (p. 332) - though they are reproduced, seem secondary to the effect that is created. This outcome is caused by a combination of music and verbal language. A French reader will understand the gist of the words, even if they are not able to translate them directly (which they probably are). This is equally the case in *La Faustin*, where Greek and Spanish appear in the text, translated, where the Italian is translated in neither *La Faustin* nor *Chérie*, because it relates principally to art and music.[17] Italian is used in *Manette Salomon*, but is explained by virtue of the fact the novel deals with art; it is used in *Madame Gervaisais*, but this is not unusual as the novel takes place in Rome. Italian is used in *Les Frères Zemganno* and *La Faustin* to convey sensations pertaining to light, sound and art. In *Les Frères Zemganno*, Spanish is used for no apparent reason in a sub-story that has little relevance to the narrative.

In solo novels, it is a combination of the sensation words create and their foreignness that is vital to both characters and reader, not the words themselves, and certainly not their meaning. This is all the more true of the Greek words, which, without the benefit of translation, are all but incomprehensible and indecipherable to speakers of Latin alphabet languages. In this context, words are akin to performances or displays of linguistic virtuosity. The ability of a word to signify through something other than its referent is intimated by Pierre Sabatier in *L'Esthétique des Goncourt*. Sabatier clearly sees the Goncourtian word as contributing to a new *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic that is very different from the typical Naturalist one: 'Pour eux, comme pour nos poètes symbolistes et décadents, tout mot, par ses sonorités, renferme une puissance de

[17] The translation is given as 'Je m'appelle Vénus, la déesse au renom répandu parmi les mortels et dans le ciel' (p. 42). Other untranslated terms are 'pianissimo' (*La Faustin*, p. 13; *Chérie*, p. 263), 'a giorno' (*Les Frères Zemganno*, p. 69); '¡Quiero, quiero ver el culo de mi tia!' (*La Faustin*, p. 71).

suggestion, une richesse d'évocation, qu'il s'agit seulement de mettre en valeur par une savante disposition'.[18]

The obverse of this use of foreign language for effect is that in *La Faustin*, for instance, regardless of the fact that for a significant portion of the novel the eponymous actress is sequestered with her British lover and his sadistic friend George Selwyn, there is relatively little use of English. Sabatier's comments offer a possible explanation as to why this would be the case: if words are meaningful due to their sonority, then this is all that is necessary of foreign words. The narrator, in contrast, accounts for the lack of English in dialogue in another way: 'Il y a encore chez l'Anglais le dédain de la parole inutile, et comme une pudeur, très distinguée d'ailleurs, à ne pas souligner les marques de son amour avec du verbiage' (p. 212). It is added that 'l'Anglais n'a pas le vocabulaire d'amour' (p. 212) and this is made patently clear in what is without doubt one of the most dramatic uses of foreign language in any of Goncourt's novels. The gruesome scene occurs when Lord Annandale is on his deathbed. Juliette, the consummate actress, studies him as though he were not even a living being, much less her dying lover:

> [...] un rire courant dans le sinistre rictus des dernières convulsions de la vie sur une face humaine, un rire [...] devenu une sorte d'épouvantable caricature satanique; enfin la plus étonnante chose qu'il fut donné à un artiste dramatique de voir. Et ce spectacle, tuant pour un moment l'amant, faisait rentrer de force l'actrice dans la femme (p. 306).

In a brief moment of lucidity before his death Annandale screams, twice, and his words are the last of the novel: 'Turn out that woman!' (p. 307). There is a symbolic return to the mother tongue here, marking the distance that has come to stand between the two lovers. It also, of course, adds to the stereotype of the eccentric and corrupt British gentleman, already introduced in the text in the form of the sinister George Selwyn, who holidays in a castle named after a character of the Marquis de

[18] (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970), p. 403.

Sade's. Nevertheless, theatre and acting are gulfs that separate Juliette and William, and this is accentuated by the histrionic and melodramatic nature of these English imperatives from the death bed.

The question of language in this episode has been addressed on a broader level, as well. Mireille Dottin-Orisini's comparison of Lord Annandale's use of English with the use of French in Oscar Wilde's play *Salomé* is revealing:

> Quant au cri final de la pièce de Wilde ('Tuez cette femme!' S'écrie Hérode…), il se souvient de celui de l'Anglais agonisant aux dernières pages de *La Faustin*, dans toute l'horreur que leur geste (baiser une bouche morte, imiter *La Faustin*. Salomé comme Juliette une agonie) inspire au regard masculin, n'est plus qu'une femme [sic]: 'Turn out that woman!'. Dans les deux cas, il s'agit de punir une insulte faite à l'homme aimé, le sacrilège d'un irrespect envers la mort. On notera que l'auteur français jette l'anathème en anglais et l'Anglais [sic], en français.[19]

It would be more accurately Decadent to state that Annandale has realised that Juliette, as a woman, can only ever be a duplicitous and deceptive actor ('Une artiste… vous n'êtes que cela… la femme incapable d'aimer!', p. 244). Regardless, this particular example taken from Goncourt's 1882 work seems to be somewhat exceptional as regards use of English or any foreign language in a novel, much less this one.

By and large, the English that is employed in *La Faustin* is superficial and perfunctory and does not attest to the linguistic prowess of the author, but to his intrusions into the text. By way of example we could refer to chapter 27 where Lord Annandale's Parisian mansion is transformed into an English-style mansion, and the various component parts are described using somewhat random English words,

[19] The fact that Wilde's entire drama was written in French does not seem to have been taken into account. Mireille Dottin-Orsini, *'La Faustin*, les paons blancs et l'agonie sardonique' in *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanès (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997), pp. 247-60 (p. 255).

which have a utilitarian descriptive function. Curiously, the same descriptive process does not apply to the castle at Lake Constance where the two lovers holiday – German is not used for descriptive purposes. What detracts from the 'effet-de-réel' is the fact that the majority of words are followed by a description or translation in French, thus revealing that there are linguistic equivalents in French and that use of the foreign language is but exaggerated display. Examples of this sort of tagging are: '*footman*, le valet de pied', 'le *parlour*, le parloir', '*butler* (sommelier), une espèce de maitre d'hôtel', 'il y avait le *boy*, un garçonnet de seize ans', 'la *house-keeper*, la matrone en noir', 'un essaim de *chamber maids*, au petit bonnet-papillon, chargées du service des chambres' (pp. 194-5). Descriptions are funny, yet needlessly lengthy, because of double tagging.

When Gianni and Nello move to London to train, the manner in which foreign words are transcribed, rather than the Zemgannos' use of them, is most remarkable. The following passage is drawn directly from a chapter on an acrobat called 'Alhambra Joe' in an English book entitled *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities*. It is engaging because it furnishes a graphic illustration of how the 'document humain' and 'écriture artiste' sometimes overlap. It underscores the particularities of language and vocabulary. Foreign words are transcribed in different ways: some are in italics, some in bold, others hyphenated where they are not in the original language.

> Il existait dans Victoria-Street un endroit nommé *Les Ruines*. C'était un immense terrain, où la commission des AMELIORATIONS METROPOLITAINES avait fait démolir trois ou quatre cents maisons, un espace désert tout parsemé d'écroulements [...]. Les Ruines, depuis plusieurs années, étaient le rendez-vous, le gymnase en plein air de tous les acrobates gymnastes, *trapézistes* du trapèze volant ou du trapèze fixe, clowns, jongleurs, danseurs de cordes, équilibristes sans emploi, de tous les gens nés dans la *sciure de bois* ou désireux d'y vivre. (p. 104).[20]

[20] This is the source passage from Thomas Frost's *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875): '...and, besides fixing up the ropes for the flying rings in my grand-mother's orchard at Norwood, for practice on Sundays we took our fakements nearly every evening to the "ruins", as they were called, in Victoria Street. Do you know where I mean?" I did know the place, and remembered that it conveyed the idea that a Metropolitan Improvement Commission's notions of

Importantly, on the one occasion that the brothers use English when they are in Paris the consequences are disastrous. The word that launches their act at their premiere - 'Go' - is foreign, a departure from the norm of French language, if it is standard circus vocabulary.

On another note, the demolition site as circus arena is a travesty of the life led by aesthetes. It is arguably the farthest one can get from conceptions of high art and refined cultural activity. It is also an allegory of the Goncourts' own wanderings into the life of the working class, which they sought to portray artistically and realistically. In later novels, this seems less to be the case. Complicated vocabulary does not always result from a complicated scenario or setting. Books dealing with base environments have refined, elegant vocabularies that contrast with their subject matter. As stated earlier, in these four texts, the contrast between vulgar and refined, base and elevated, is a reflection of the historical circumstances of the novel. The use of foreign words in these novels, however, is not entirely accounted for by the changing nature of French vocabulary. Italian was widely used around the 1880s in discussions of art, while English was growing in usage in matters of industry and economics, not to mention sport, racing and other elegant pastimes;[21] but, these are not always the uses to which these languages are put in Goncourt's solo novels. The use of foreign vocabulary in these four works illustrates that criteria of both Naturalism and Decadence are in play. For, while certain foreign words may realistically portray an environment, they may also signal the author's erudition through needless lexical explanations and repetitive highlighting that lead to

---

street improvement consisted in demolishing some three or four hundred houses, and creating a wilderness of unfinished houses, yawning chasms, and heaps of rubbish. The place remained in that condition for several years, and was the rendezvous and free gymnasium of most of the gymnasts, acrobats, rope-dancers, and other professors of muscular sensationalism in the metropolis' (p. 227). Cf. p. 103, note 22.

[21] See *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, 8 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1899), 3: *Dix-neuvième siècle, période contemporaine (1850-1900)*, pp. 811-40, and Rémy de Gourmont, *Esthétique de la langue française* (Paris: Éditions Ivrea, 1995), chapter 8.

disruptive narrator intrusions. There is, therefore, a distance between author and mass reading public. Additionally, foreign vocabulary may prevent the progression of narrative by leading the average reader to lexical incomprehension.

*****

The Goncourt Brothers' novels have been interpreted as lacking composition, cohesion, substance, plot, and many other essential qualities which help create meaning.[22] The Goncourts were often criticised for being too lax with their language and composition, for being too precious, for having too many mannerisms, for writing gobbledegook ('charabia'). Many, Maupassant publicly, took issue with Edmond de Goncourt's language, arguing that it lacked lucidity and clarity, and, therefore, universality. In the preface to *Pierre et Jean* (1888), Maupassant writes that Realist authors should not have recourse to 'clowneries de langage' and that 'il n'est point besoin du vocabulaire bizarre, compliqué, nombreux et chinois, qu'on nous impose aujourd'hui sous le nom d'écriture artiste.'[23] Thus while it might initially appear that Edmond de Goncourt draws on varied and contrasting vocabularies in order to accurately represent reality, as a manifestation of 'écriture artiste' this practice undeniably creates difficulties on the level of interpretation and was perceived as being non-realistic. While all of these diverse elements would seem to be simply necessary for reproducing a given social reality, they are equally the tools used to uncover what language disguises. Vocabulary performs several functions in

[22] The three critics who seem to object most vigorously to the Goncourtian style are, chronologically, Ferdinand Brunetière in *Le Roman naturaliste* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1892), pp. 273-96; Jean-Pierre Richard who wrote an essay entitled 'Deux écrivains épidermiques: Edmond et Jules de Goncourt', published in *Littérature et Sensation: Stendhal, Flaubert* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1954), pp. 299-321; and Lazare Prajs in *La Fallacité de l'oeuvre romanesque des Goncourt* (Paris: Nizet, 1974).

[23] Guy de Maupassant, *Pierre et Jean*, ed. by G. Hainsworth. (London: Harrap, 1966), p. 46. On the other hand, Maupassant greatly admired Goncourt's final novel ('La Jeune fille', *Le Gaulois*, 27 April 1884) and wrote to Goncourt in 1878 saying 'je vous relis sans cesse pour tâcher d'apprendre les secrets de votre phrase dont chaque épithète jette comme une lumière sur les choses qu'elle touche' (B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22470 fols 20-1). He talks in another letter about 'la puissance et la souplesse de votre style' (B.N.F. M.S.S. N.A.F., 22470 fol. 23), so consistency may not be his forte. A similar difference in Maupassant's public and private opinions is noted upon by David Baguley with respect to Zola's work. *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), p. 21.

these novels: in terms of literary realism it is utilitarian and creates an 'effet-de-réel'; it is pan-national and multilingual; it links present artistic challenges with past endeavours; and, finally, it accentuates appearances and peculiarities of language in order to uncover a hidden truth.

Ultimately, the Zemganno brothers, unlike the Goncourt brothers – though this is contested with regard to the latter – do not succeed in their attempt to revolutionise their art. None of Goncourt's protagonists do: the doomed nature of creativity is an aesthetic necessity of Edmond de Goncourt's literature as it is in much *fin-de-siècle* literature. The Zemganno's *tour de force* is sabotaged when one prop is replaced by another. Gianni suspects all is not well, hesitates, and Nello breaks his legs in a suspicious accident. The fate that awaits Gianni, and particularly Nello, is provoked by two causes: the first, which has not been dealt with here, is the *femme fatale*, the American equestrian - an aristocratic art-form if ever there were one - 'la' Tompkins. The second, which is perhaps more pertinent to the present discussion, however, is the word which Gianni must whisper to his brother in order to launch their performance, a word which is conventionally used by all at circuses to get the show rolling, but a word which has no particular symbolism in its language of origin: 'Go!', 'ce solennel "Go", l'appel que l'un fait à l'autre de venir le retrouver à travers le vide, - pour ce "Va" qui est peut-être la mort' (p. 213). When Gianni calls Nello, it is with a '"Go" hésitant, inquiet, désespéré, et qui avait l'intonation de ces "à la grâce de Dieu" poussés en un de ces instants mortels où il faut prendre un parti, sans qu'il vous soit donné le temps de reconnaître, d'interroger le danger' (p. 220). Importantly, even after Nello's legs are broken in the fall, and the clowns have resigned themselves to busking and playing their fiddles for a living, Nello's only desire is to read his sixteenth-century gymnastic manual. The conviction remains that the process of innovation chosen by the brothers is suitable, even if it is hazardous. This belief seems to be shared by aspiring authors of the time, for the rise of the Decadent

novel - which develops many of the risks presented in Edmond de Goncourt's novels - followed his works by only a few years.

In *La Fille Élisa*, a simple word is *mis-en-abîme* in much the same manner and likewise attains a degree of symbolism otherwise unattached to it. Moreover, the same narrative technique is employed to accentuate the importance of the single syllable word. After the jury deliver their verdict of guilty in Élisa's murder trial, the narrator repeats, almost lyrically, the condemning word: 'En le saisissement de ce mortel "Oui, sans circonstances atténuantes", de ce "oui" redouté, mais non attendu – du froid passe dans tous les dos, et le frisson des spectateurs remonte jusqu'aux impassibles exécuteurs de la loi' (p. 7). These two examples demonstrate the power of even the most banal word to influence situations and change the course of events, if used at the wrong time or in the wrong way (this same lesson will be learned by the men from Ruaux-les-Fous, as will be shown in the following chapter).

Each of the characters in the three final novels seeks artistic innovation in an environment which no longer fulfils their aesthetic demands. Mirroring this yearning for originality, the novels adopt several different vocabularies in an attempt to renew and extend literary language. Attempts to transcend artistic norms are extremely perilous enterprises. Goncourt's artists have difficulty reconciling high art with popular art-forms: Gianni and Nello wish to transform the circus into something it is not: elevated and refined, Juliette Faustin must create while simultaneously entertaining the masses, remaining true to herself by using vocabularies that span centuries and civilisations (she unsuccessfully attempts to give this up altogether in the name of love). Similarly, Chérie has difficulty reconciling high art with the superficial world in which she moves. Difficulty also arises due to the very nature of the arts portrayed: the circus and the theatre are both popular. Edmond de Goncourt faces the same constraints as his protagonists. While refinement appears to be one of

the primary concerns of Goncourt's novels, so are the doomed ambitions of his characters whose artistic and personal aspirations inevitably result in decline and fall.

The fact that none of the protagonists succeed in living an artistic life and transcending the restraints of the body without disastrous (sometimes fatal) consequences reflects a general disillusionment of the late nineteenth century. The characters are suspended on a tightrope between, at the one extreme, the need for specialised art-forms and, at the other extreme, the environment in which they wish to innovate and live, an environment with a specific vocabulary essential to understanding it. The impossibility of art appears to be an absolute end, as ideal art can never be adequately expressed through language. In terms of literary language, the consequence of this kind of uncomfortable balancing act is a privileging of 'paraître' over 'être'. Although the excessive lexical cultivation of the novels may suggest that language is attempting to pinpoint an essential, higher, truth, it is at this very moment of lexical searching that words are denied deeper meanings - because they are too obscure or enigmatic - and become significant for their beauty rather than their meaning. This echoes closely the way in which Edmond de Goncourt is constrained by the pull between consecration as a member of the Naturalist movement and, on the other hand, the desire for refinement. Specialised vocabulary is supposed to help the reader approach artistic truth, but risks alienating authors from both public and peers.

Chapter 4E
Language
Alternative Modes of Expression

If Edmond de Goncourt's characters fail in terms of communication, and if the link between direct discourse and plot development is weakened in the novels, it is due to a privileging of aesthetic expression over utilitarian communication. With the notable exception of *La Fille Élisa*, each of the novels features characters who are, in one way or another, artistic. The Zemganno brothers are circus performers, La Faustin is an actress, and Chérie transforms her body into art through her obsession with fashion and dress. Significantly, the protagonists' creativity is not necessarily expressed in verbal language, but through alternative art-forms. None of the characters choose written or verbal language as their medium. They instead focus on visual or performance arts. Even where the art-form is oral, for example, where the theatre is concerned, attention is put on the manner in which things are expressed rather than on what is being expressed. Verbal language is portrayed as sensual rather than meaningful, and this sensuality is indicative of a cleavage within language itself where the aesthetic and the utilitarian must coexist. This chapter will oppose the notions of natural sensuality and civilised aestheticism by exploring the creative channels that are left open to the protagonists.

The tension between competing visions of art is in part a result of the opposition between rural and urban societies. The desperate artistic search of the Zemganno brothers begins once they leave their idyllic travelling circus. In *Chérie*, the main character's eccentric and affected artistry is contrasted with the sensuality of her childhood language. This childhood language is in opposition to more refined and civilised forms of expression. In chapter 48 of the 1884 novel, Chérie overhears two girls speaking the 'langue de son enfance' (p. 153), and this language is presented as inextricably linked to the sensual. Though the reader does not read the 'patois' (p. 153), its effects on Chérie are noted, as though 'ce parler de caresse' (p. 153) had

physically touched the eavesdropper. In chapter 15, Chérie's governess Lizadie tells a fairytale of three characters - a mayor, his deputy, and a schoolmaster - from a village called Ruaux-les-Fous. These dignitaries wish to learn French. However, after an unfortunate incident where their French is misunderstood, they are imprisoned for speaking it inappropriately and inadvertently confessing to murder. By not understanding the language that is spoken to them and its function, the fairytale characters are forced from an idealised conception of language, based in the realm of the imaginary, and foisted into the positivist realities of a France where language is transactional and communicative. With the help of a timely fairy, they return to their native Lorraine never to leave, nor speak an urban language, again: 'ils mouraient bien des années après n'ayant, jusqu'au jour de leur mort, jamais plus parlé que patois' (p. 71). Goncourt's heroine, unlike the three fairytale characters, returns to her native Lorraine, but speaks a foreign (non-native, non-indigenous, non-organic) language: French. She is condemned to an expressive prison, from which she can only escape through other modes of expression. Her escape will be mostly based on appearances, and therefore accounts for the predominance of description over dialogue in the novel.

In *La Fille Élisa* there is a incompatibility between base subject and refined writing. There is even a tension between base environment and language and refined inner spirit. For this reason it is amazing that Élisa, who is initially presented as a foul-mouthed street urchin, is transformed into the most desirable of women once in a provincial brothel. This improbability is accounted for by the simple fact that she is from Paris, and speaks an urban language:

> Parmi ces femelles, la plupart originaires du Bassigny, Élisa apportait dans sa personne la *femminilité* que donne la grande capitale civilisée à la jeune fille élevée, grandie entre ses murs. Elle avait une élégante tournure, de jolis gestes; dans le chiffonnage des étoffes légères et volantes habillant son corps, elle mettait de la grâce de Paris (p. 37).

Paris influences even its most deprived inhabitants, and a new word is used to describe this (unlikely yet ancient) quality that the city bestows on its daughters: *femminilité*. As for the way that Élisa speaks, when it is described from the point of view of the people in Lorraine, it is perceived as quite different from the popular, crass language examined in the preceding chapter:

> Elle parlait presque comme le monde qui parle bien, écoutait ce qui se disait avec un rire intelligent, se répandait certains jours en une verve gouailleuse d'enfant du pavé parisien, étonnant de son bruit le mauvais lieu de la petite ville (p. 37).

As in *Les Frères Zemganno*, the countryside has an idealising, edenic quality which influences those new to it. The countryside is associated with happiness and fulfillment, with love and with elevation of spirit – not so much for those who live there on a permanent basis, but for those who visit. Within this framework, the descriptions of brothel life are all the more effective: Élisa seems refined, but the people who surround her, though oddly immersed in the good country air, are not similarly affected.

The rejuvenating power of the countryside is a theme in *Chérie* as well, evident when the protagonist is reminded of the language of her youth. In this instance (chapter 15), French is painted as though it imprisons its speakers within a system, while Lotharingien (and, one assumes, other provincial dialects) connotes liberty. The obverse of Chérie's expression through fashion is her link to a provincial language. The artificiality of Parisian society is accentuated by the sensuality associated in the novel with the Lorraine language.

> Dans la chaleur et l'odeur d'Orient de la journée, les deux fillettes, tout en épongeant la sueur de l'entre-deux de leurs seins, causaient en patois, - dans ce parler de caresse et de musique et de l'enfance d'un pays, - causaient de la douceur du premier baiser d'amour donné sur la bouche (p. 153).

Chérie is 'étonnée de se rappeler si bien la langue de son enfance' (p. 133) and eavesdrops on the conversation. This language and its vocabulary are both hidden from the reader. Nonetheless they penetrate the young protagonist's psyche and become inextricably linked with pastoral pleasure and lazy summer days (both of which are absent in Paris). In order for Chérie to be fulfilled, the gulf between town and country needs to be lessened. Frustration reigns, however, and the gap is never narrowed.

The opposition between urban (or civilised) and rural (or natural) linguistic and artistic realities is somewhat different in *La Faustin*. In this novel, the heroine's obsession with the theatre is underlined once she is removed from its environs. Juliette Faustin is taken over, haunted even, by her theatrical passion from the moment letters from Paris reach her at her retreat on Lake Constance. In chapter 47 of the novel, which takes place at the rural retreat, the actress says but two lines, one of which comes to pass during a bout of sleepwalking in which she acts the role of Hermione. In the chapter that follows this nocturnal incident, the actress addresses herself and orders herself to change her ways:

> L'actrice, à la suite d'impatiences muettes, se mettait tout à coup à crier avec des piétinements colères, comme si elle s'adressait à une autre créature qu'elle-même: "Non! Non! Puisque je vous dis que c'est fini, fini, à tout jamais fini!" (p. 266).

La Faustin is aware that she is a subject divided between art and reality and this reading of actresses is cherished during the second half of the nineteenth century and was positively worshipped by the Decadents. Nowhere is the inherent duality of artists more succinctly summed up than in *The Decadent Imagination*, where it is maintained that the artist is a 'victim of a fatal duality inherent in his personality [...] he is doomed to be constantly torn between the two sides of his own nature, one experiencing with great intensity, and even pain, all the impressions life has to offer,

the other lucid and disillusioned, coldly observing and judging them'.[1] Juliette herself is an example of this: she struggles to banish the conflict between theatrical discourse and private discourse. If Juliette somnambulistically lapses into theatrical mode even without an audience, it demonstrates that theatre has become for her a purely artistic act (it has been separated from its popular environment). Her voice is indissociable from the voice of the heroines she portrays and will be forever intermingled with that of a non-existent fictional other. Torn between playing a role in the theatre and playing the role of lover, in chapter 54, Juliette is brusquely brought back to reality and out of her imagined theatrical world by the use of English, in which foreign language she must respond ('Oh yes, yes wait', p. 282). In this novel, nature perverts the characters and only makes their need for artistic expression greater. Deprived of a creative forum, the thespian withdraws into herself and disconnects herself from her pastoral environment by, for all intents and purposes, severing communicative links with her lover. Annandale's attempts to separate Juliette from her fatal artistic drive are in vain.

On a thematic level the dichotomy in the actress testifies to a cleavage between natural and artificial language, a cleavage between two contrasting states of existence. The theatre so dominates Juliette's life that certain chapters of the novel, such as chapter 10, read like a play. The passage is presented as a drama would be, except that the actress' voice becomes confused with the voice of her character. Three speakers are involved in an exchange during a rehearsal: 'l'actrice', 'le metteur en scène' and 'le directeur'. The actress reads her lines from *Phèdre* (which are written as direct discourse in the novel) and the two others comment on her performance and coach her. The reader is thus left to imagine how 'l'actrice' portrays her role and speaks her lines, as well as what the 'directeur' and 'metteur en scène's visions of the play are. It is only at the end of the rehearsal that the actress is named,

[1] Jean Pierrot, *The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900*, trans. by Derek Coltman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 50-1.

but confusingly, she is designated by her nickname while her interlocutor retains his dramatic name:

> Et la Faustin, apostrophant Hippolyte, lui disait sur un ton agressif: 'Mais je ne peux pas cependant aller chercher votre épée sous votre tunique... le geste est pour moi horriblement difficile... il faut que par votre position... vous me fournissiez un mouvement qui ne soit ni un mouvement commun, ni un mouvement canaille (p. 98).

The conversation accentuates the protagonist's duality by giving her, but not the others, two names, and by showing how the reality of life as an actor divides her. This offers yet another illustration of how direct discourse contributes not so much to the development of plot in this instance, but to characterisation. Juliette is inextricably a creature of artifice.

Moreover, in reproducing a theatrical rehearsal - and much space is devoted to describing how the actress learns to perform - gestures and feeling are emphasised so as to minimise the importance of meaning in verbal language. In the 1882 novel, the narrator must recreate theatrical performances and rehearsals in such a way that words become gestures, and the same lines are not repeated *ad infinitum*. In an argument with her director, the actress, unable to say her lines correctly, asks him: 'Comment le diriez-vous, vous?' (p. 90). This is his reply: 'LE METTEUR EN SCENE: "Je désire ne pas le dire... je voudrais ce que ce fût vous... et dans l'intonation que je sens..."' (p. 90). The director's response is offset as though it were part of the play itself. Verbal language is a stimulus rather than a means of communication, pitch and tone are of utmost importance in gaining entry to a hidden world of symbolic meaning and this confirms that verbal communication is sidelined in favour of a conception of art that goes beyond verbal meaning.

In *Chérie* as well, art is felt and not thought. The main character detects beauty 'au moyen de son délicat et susceptible système nerveux' (p. 201). When she reads she

puts perfume on her books. Music is a drug to her. When she plays piano she is affected by a 'joie fiévreuse', it gives her a fittingly Decadent 'bien-être exalté, [...] un fouettement des facultés imaginatives, une augmentation de son être sensitif, enfin un petit rien des jouissances surnaturelles que procurent aux hommes les stupéfiants: car la musique n'est peut-être point autre chose que le *haschisch* des femmes' (pp. 104-5). This experience only happens when music is not associated with lessons, is not the domain of music teachers.

Whereas Juliette's spoken voice is often confused with the voice of the heroines she embodies, in *Chérie*, the protagonist's spoken voice is replaced by the pen in terms of communication and by fashion in terms of art. The only instances where Chérie expresses her inner self through verbal language are in private situations. Two chapters of the 1884 novel reproduce in their alleged entirety documents purportedly written by the heroine, but it is through the visual that the Parisian really manages to express her artistry. In chapter 25 the heroine's teacher, Jodocus Cochemer (note the similarity of assonance with 'cauchemar') predicts that 'elle écrira très joliment, Mlle Haudancourt' (p. 98). The reader is never shown a written example of Chérie's 'côté imaginatif' (p. 97), nor her 'aptitude à forger des histoires' (p. 97) in terms of written expression. The only samples of the main character's written expressive skills deal with genres that are usually considered as purely non-fiction, rather than imaginative: firstly, a personal code of conduct; secondly, extracts of her journal; and, thirdly, found by her grandfather after her death, a note expressing anguish over a secret love.

What is termed by the omniscient narrator as Chérie's 'goût à la composition de style' (p. 97) is only witnessed in matters of dress and fashion. Numerous glimpses of the girl's aptitude to graft a style onto her body are provided (like the Zemganno brothers, Chérie's body has its own gesticular language which transcends the purely verbal). At moments, Chérie objectifies herself and this objectification is made

manifest stylistically by the fact that oral discourse appears in isolation, which is to say it does not form part of a linguistic exchange between two characters. Young, the heroine falls and cries 'je suis cassée, je suis cassée' (p. 73). She also refers to herself in the third person, thereby emptying her being of its 'self': 'Chérie a fait ça' (p. 42). Older, she is a mannequin who only discusses what colours, at a given instant, suit her, what colours will create the greatest, most splendid, effect. The frivolity of this attitude is apparent as much in her words that make reference to a precious metal - 'Non, le rose ne me va pas décidément aujourd'hui... Il ne me fait pas la peau argentine, mais du tout...' (p. 255) - as in the narrator's description which repeats four times words based on 'teint', two times the word 'jour', three times the word 'nuance', three words derived from light ('lumière' and 'lumineux'), and makes reference to the girl's 'photogénité' (p. 255). In keeping with the general tenets of 'écriture artiste', this description transforms the child into a painting. It is not a person that is described, but an object (this mirrors Chérie's own inclinations to turn herself into an object). The heroine's voice is not the voice of 'écriture artiste', she does not speak in what could be called 'parole artiste'. However, the subject of her discourse deals with visual appearances (her speech is not elaborate, but the appearances she describes are).

Paul Bourget discusses the style of the Goncourt brothers in terms that can, while taken slightly out of context - he was referring to the Goncourt brothers as authors, not to their characters - crystallise the issue of individual artistic style in the Edmond de Goncourt's characters: 'Le style d'un écrivain, c'est l'expression et comme le raccourci de toute sa manière habituelle de penser et de sentir. Se découvrir un style, c'est tout simplement avoir le courage de noter les mouvements de son *moi*'.[2] The movements of Goncourt's 'moi' are of little import here - and, in any event, they are made available to all in his own *Journal: mémoires de la vie littéraire*. But, if 'style'

[2] *Essais de psychologie contemporaine: études littéraires*, ed. by André Guyaux (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), p. 336.

is replaced by 'voice' (if they are not essentially similar) in the above passage, the cause of Chérie's downfall is named. Chérie is incapable of finding self-knowledge in her writings because, as has been argued in the preceding section, they reflect a common male world-view at the time of publication of the novel: that women were incapable of self-knowledge.[3] This view is at the heart of *Chérie*, a novel which is ripe with these sorts of stereotypes. In fact, the inability to achieve self-knowledge, the inability to arrive at the 'truth' may, from a Decadent perspective, be a truth unto itself. There is thus a link between the inabilities of women and the impotence of art.

Chérie's writings, therefore, are not where her *fin-de-siècle* penchant for aesthetic refinement is best expressed. This is affirmed by the narrator, who explains that Chérie's fundamental artistry, like that of any woman, is expressed through fashion:

> Au fond, la toilette pour une femme, c'est le moyen de témoigner de l'artiste qui habite en elle, [...] c'est le moyen d'exposer sa grâce, sa gentillesse, sa beauté, parmi l'arrangement, le coloris, l'harmonie d'un heureux tableau; c'est le moyen de faire de sa personne, dans les sociétés civilisées, à travers les incessants changements de modes et d'ajustements, un charmant et frêle objet d'art, toujours renouvelé, toujours nouveau (pp. 252-3).

She searches for 'sensation' (p. 247) and novelty through appearance, as is illustrated in chapter 74, where she is described as 'déraisonnablement mondaine' (p. 247). Chérie has in-depth knowledge of the art of fashion in all its guises: including dress, perfume, and make-up, to name but a few. She shares these concerns with many a Decadent character, most notably Huysmans' des Esseintes, whom Edmond de Goncourt considered as her soul mate. Goncourt commented in his *Journal* that des Esseintes was like the 'silhouette du futur de Chérie' and remarked to Huysmans, 'mais savez-vous que cela a un peu l'air de la monographie du mari que devrait épouser Chérie' (16 May 1884, 2, p. 1074; *Corres. Huys-Gonc.*, letter 13, 21 May

[3] Maupassant writes in an article entitled 'La Jeune fille' in *Le Gaulois* of 27 April 1884: 'Comment découvrir les délicates sensations que la jeune fille elle-même méconnaît encore, qu'elle ne peut ni expliquer, ni comprendre, ni analyser, et qu'elle oubliera presque entièrement lorsqu'elle sera devenue femme'.

1884, p. 80, note 1). This knowledge of fashion and appearances enables the socialite to be always the centre of attention and to be always an *objet-d'ar*t to interpret and behold in its beauty: 'Il lui arrivait à *soigner*, à la façon d'une actrice, ses entrées, et d'appartenir coeur et âme, tout le temps qu'elle passait dans le monde, à la production d'*effets*' (p. 247).

Chérie suffers - this is not the word Goncourt would have chosen, as its implications are far too negative - from 'une sorte de spiritualité du chiffon' (p. 250) which causes her to want to be always more refined, more civilised, more eccentric. The style of her dress and coiffure reflects the level of civilisation of society and the prerogatives of the *fin-de-siècle* dictate that refinement is linked to knowledge of cultures distant in both time and space. So, like the Zemganno brothers who create new performances by building on earlier gymnastic knowledge, Chérie dons dresses – costumes even – that draw on multiple fashion sources. In the privacy of her own room she wears an eighteenth-century dress ('la fanfreluche, le pasquillage argentés de la broderie', p. 257) that has been crossed with a '*haïck*, ce vêtement de l'Orient' (p. 256). In addition, 'Chérie se faisait coiffer par sa femme de chambre avec des gazons, de grandes herbes vertes tressées en couronne au-dessus de ses cheveux épars…' (p. 276). These costumes convey the child's indulgence and Decadent love of artifice. Concerned solely with 'des adorations paresseuses de sa personne' (p. 257) the child sinks into debased depravity. Artificiality, according to A.E. Carter, 'is not only urban and modern, but sickly […] decadent'.[4] As Carter's comment attests, Chérie's artistry can be tied to a much larger thematic interest of nineteenth-century literature.

The eccentricity of her appearance is mirrored in the eccentricities of language that many critics have identified in 'écriture artiste'. What is paradoxical is that 'écriture

[4] *The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, 1830-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), p. 17.

artiste' is an ideal medium to describe this kind of visual embellishment, as it is itself so concerned with appearances, with portraying that which is seen rather than that which is felt, and rather than that which is happening. Likewise, fashion is presented as a language in its own right, but a language that focuses on outward appearances. Goncourt's language, too, reflects fashion and outward appearances, and this very modern materialism bespeaks a fundamental cultural shift away from essentialism and dogmatic mimetic representations of reality.

The world of appearance is precisely what Pierre Saint-Amand believes both the Goncourts love about fashion. He contends that 'ce que les Goncourt célèbrent dans la mode, c'est le triomphe de l'ostentation, les signes les plus éloquents du paraître, la célébration totale de l'artifice'.[5] Indeed, in the three final novels, the characters masquerade as something or somebody else, manifesting a very Decadent propensity for disguise, otherness, and possibly even debauchery. Juliette Faustin earns her living by travestying herself. Chérie chooses to do so in order to distance herself from the repetitive *ennui* of everyday existence. Nello, the reader is told, takes great pleasure in disguising himself. When presented with his first costume, 'il prenait entre ses bras son aimable travestissement' (p. 57), as if the costume itself were alive. Other worlds are evoked, as are metals drawn from the centre of the earth:

> Il était vêtu de couleurs de fumée et d'ombre aux sombres fulgurations des métaux cachés dans les entrailles de la terre, des nacres noires dormant au fond des Océans, et que, dans les cieux sans clartés, agitent sur leurs ailes les papillons de nuit (p. 129).

The descriptions of him in costume, however, are sinister and announce trouble yet to come. This trouble stems from his divided nature and his abdication of his own personality in favour of his 'autre lui-même du soir' (p. 143). In these descriptions, it is Nello, rather than the costume, who is lifeless, Nello who is turned to stone, Nello

[5] 'La Passion de l'éphèmère', *L'Esprit créateur*, 37 (1997), 21-33 (p. 21).

whose eyes glaze over. With white paint he creates a 'visage de statue' (p. 143), he is transformed into 'un homme-statue du pays sublunaire' (p. 143), and his body obeys 'l'impulsion de courants magnétiques biscornus' (p. 144). His movements are 'de somnambule et d'halluciné' (p. 144). Alterity is the governing force of the Zemgannos' art, escape one of their principal objectives.

The significance of the divide between aesthetics and communication, and between verbal language and other art forms, permeates the three later post-1870 novels, and is a reflection of Edmond de Goncourt's own artistic beliefs as well as the transformation that the literary field was undergoing at the end of the nineteenth century. As stated in chapter 4 A, one of the commonly accepted traits of 'écriture artiste' is the manner in which it concentrates on the mechanisms of seeing and writing, that is to say on the process of creation. In these texts, the alternative modes of expression favoured by characters accentuate the visual over other senses, and in this way the thematic interests of the novels mirror those of 'écriture artiste'. 'Écriture artiste' sought to rejuvenate language in order to make it less common, less popularist. The industrialisation of literature jeopardised the individuality of authors and their styles. The Goncourt Brothers' style is in many ways a backlash against this, a means of guaranteeing individuality in a world - and a market - with ever-expanding borders. In like manner, each of the central characters in Edmond de Goncourt's last three solo novels is an artist, and each is driven by their art. Gianni and Nello seek a means by which to revolutionise acrobatics; Juliette Faustin cannot escape her art, which eats into, and divides, her psyche; Chérie, finally lives amidst swirls of exotic fabrics and fashions in order to forget or repress the demands of a repetitive and fatigued society.

There is a similarity between Goncourt's own artistic concerns - as well as the concerns of his characters - and Max Nordau's reactionary yet influential reading of the *fin-de-siècle* artist as a 'degenerate' whose illness has been mistaken for 'a

sensitive nature yearning for aesthetic thrills'.[6] Koenraad Swart's remark that 'the only recourse open to the individual was to escape into the world of art and beauty' nowhere rings more true.[7] In Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels, the thrills gained from gesture and effect far outweigh the joys of meaning.

[6] *Degeneration* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), p. 5.
[7] *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 168.

Conclusion

Approaching Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882) and *Chérie* (1884) through a Naturalist and Decadent framework provides a potent illustration of the instability that prevails in definitions of literary movements. Indeed, the case study of these four works consistently affirms the overlap between Naturalism and Decadence in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Many characteristic traits of Naturalism are reinvented and reinterpreted by Goncourt in his solo novels and given a new lease of life under the auspices on what some, though not he, would term Decadence.

The study of Goncourtian titles furnishes an important starting point for an analysis of continuity and change from pre- to post-1870 novels. Eponymous titles were common in nineteenth-century literature, yet the Goncourts' systematic use of them is almost unique to them. In pre-1870 novels, titles which initially relate to types evolve into titles relating to individuals representative of their type (the servant, the journalist), thus illustrating the brothers' singular perspective on literary Naturalism. While Edmond remained true to this general pattern, by *Chérie* in 1884, possibly as early as 1879 with *Les Frères Zemganno*, the titles to his novels had little to do with announcing typical patterns of behaviour and focused much more on names - such as Zemganno, Faustin, Chérie - that draw more heavily on imaginary rather than observed realities. The evolution of Goncourtian titles thus provides the first indications of a modification in Edmond de Goncourt's literary aesthetic.

If the titles to Goncourt's four novels quietly suggest an aesthetic shift, then their prefaces loudly confirm such an evolution. Using *Germinie Lacerteux* and its preface as the starting point, and linking the output of the Goncourt brothers to the output of Émile Zola, the prefaces to *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin* and *Chérie*, rather than explaining the novels they allegedly introduce, call for a transformation of the

literary field. By building on the successes of the past and creating an interprefatorial dialogue, Goncourt is able to call for a renewal of literature, which is exposed as healthy only if it is in a state of permanent modernisation. The novels of the Goncourt brothers are presented as founding texts of the Naturalist movement. Simultaneously, however, the surviving Goncourt is shown to be a moderniser, as someone attempting to distance himself from the base themes generally associated with Naturalist production, in favour of a more refined vision of art, both in terms of style and themes.

There are indications in the use of documentation that the part in the writing process formerly played by Jules de Goncourt is subsequently shared amongst many other contributors, be they friends asked for information or women solicited for confessions. In addition, in what is sometimes a complex intertextual relationship, other texts are researched for detail. *La Fille Élisa* is the only text by Edmond de Goncourt for which a manuscript exists, and is thus useful for examining the process of literary creation. Evidence suggests that though extensive research was carried out for the novel by both brothers, there are signs that Edmond de Goncourt adapted a new method of collaborative writing following his brother's death. The increase in correspondence relating to novels post-1877 seems to confirm this. *La Fille Élisa* is the most conventionally Naturalist of Edmond de Goncourt's novels. It portrays a prostitute and her environment and attempts to link her downfall to her social situation and to her hereditary faults; subsequent novels paint more refined characters and pay less attention to the advent of faults as to the faults themselves. The social significance of *La Fille Élisa*, together with the condemnation of the Auburn system of imprisonment that it contains, also links it to a specific moment in time, transforming its author into a polemicist. In contrast, subsequent novels have little to do with the *actualité* of the 1880s.

In the Goncourtian aesthetic, the author is equated with the historian. In the 1879, 1882 and 1884 novels, fiction and non-fiction documents, in the form of letters and books as well as notes in the *Journal*, were accumulated and incorporated into the texts. But while the process of gathering documents conforms to Naturalist methods of creation, the documents are used in service of themes reminiscent of Decadence. On the surface, *Les Frères Zemganno*, for example, appears to paint a base environment, when in fact it paints the refined artistic quest of two idealistic gymnasts. Although *Les Frères Zemganno* can be considered as a sentimental autobiographical novel, the verisimilitude that such a genre would seem to imply is disrupted by discordance between the use of, on the one hand, personal memories that are far from objective and verifiable and, on the other, observed facts relating to the world of the circus and drawn from diverse sources. The novel swings between realism in the portrayal of the circus, the author researching documents as would an historian, and Decadence in the portrayal of the main characters' artistic quest and of the *femme fatale* 'la' Tompkins. The relationship between documentation and imagination in this novel is representative of wider cultural changes in the 1880s, when Decadence was slowly encroaching on Naturalism.

In *La Faustin* as in *Chérie*, secondary characters are easily located in the Goncourt *Journal*, which in retrospect appears to have been a repository for possible future novels. Main characters, on the other hand, are much more elusive. In *La Faustin* this is largely accounted for by Goncourt's overfamiliarity with the theatrical world, past and present, and the likelihood that Juliette Faustin is a prolongation of an earlier Goncourtian character, Armande, who is herself modelled on Rachel Félix. This would also account for the almost complete absence of background information pertaining to Juliette in the novel. The link between *Les Actrices* and *La Faustin* is one example of continuity between pre- and post-1870 works. Those documents that do date from the period of writing, particularly relating to the male characters Annandale and Selwyn, tie into Decadent themes such as debauchery and heightened

degeneracy. While decline is portrayed in the Naturalist novel as a means to denounce degeneracy, in *La Faustin* it is an end in itself, as Decadent themes foreground the end result of degradation rather than its causes.

Chérie is also closely related to the emerging Decadent aesthetic, as the main character, repulsed by her body, fatally choses not to marry, and, therefore, not to reproduce. While her friends devote their lives to marriage, Chérie devotes hers to the production of artistic effects and attempts to transform herself into a work of art. The Decadent vision of a fragmented, eccentric and sickly woman depicted in *Chérie* has little relation with the picture of women contained in the documents, be they letters, books, or *Journal* entries, relating to the novel. This suggests that Goncourt had a precise vision of how he wanted to portray his character before he solicited documents from his readers. In addition to being permeated by Decadent themes such as the inability, or unwillingness, to consummate love, the collage-like structure of the text announces twentieth-century literature. Documents are collected and used out of context (if they exist at all), pasted into a text to disrupt its stability. Paradoxically, the novels of Edmond de Goncourt retain a documentary approach while casting off Naturalist documentary aims. Equally important is the evidence that documents contribute to less realistic and *vraisemblable* themes. Ultimately Edmond de Goncourt's novels exemplify a fundamental shift away from a mimetic representation of reality, even though they are allegedly grounded in it.

The disintegration of unity visible in terms of characterisation and themes, the diminishing importance of causality and hereditary frameworks, indissociable from the evolution from Naturalism toward Decadence, is also visible in terms of 'écriture artiste'. In *La Fille Élisa*, *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin* and *Chérie*, Naturalist frameworks gradually disappear to be replaced by unsubstantiated, generalising suppositions. Narratives comprise fewer and fewer events and those events that are related are often described using language that immobilises the progression of the

stories. Consequently, time becomes static, the novels cease to advance according to a cause and effect logic and the author's voice intrudes in the narrative in a way that is incongruent with the Naturalist programme which requires objectivity and impersonality. Traditional modes of representation lose their authority and the novels become, increasingly, novels about nothing.

It is not only in terms of narration that the novels eschew Naturalist causality. There is much less direct discourse in Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels than in the joint novels of the Goncourts. What discourse there is frequently stands in isolation from the main body of the text and fragments it, playing no role in advancing plot. There is a lack of trust in the representation of speech in Goncourt's four works, where silence and the inefficacy of communication contribute to some of the central themes, including duplicity, alienation and the impossibility of artistic expression. The diminishing place of direct discourse is allied to a diminishing faith in the efficacy of verbal language to communicate. Whereas traditional mimetic novels rely on a transactional conception of language, in Edmond de Goncourt's novels this no longer seems to be the case.

The vocabulary of Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels also participates in the aesthetic repositioning from mimetic Naturalist literature to Decadent literature. Each of the novels portrays a specific environment and the vocabulary deployed in them attests to a desire to represent this environment accurately, whether it is through the use of modern or ancient, foreign or French, medical, theatrical, gymnastic or other vocabularies. The quest to find the 'mot juste', which is essentially mimetic but also typical of 'écriture artiste', can, however, turn in on itself when language becomes so obscure and rarefied as to inhibit lexical comprehension and prevent interpretation. Refinement, in this case, is an end in itself, and words are important not for their meaning but for their sound, their appearance (which is often highlighted, marking certain words out as other), and their unusualness. This non-utilitarian conception of

language has no place in Naturalism, and the language deployed by Edmond de Goncourt seems in many ways closely related to Decadent experimentation.

The style of these novels everywhere rejects the link between verbal language and communication. However, the texts are not so pessimistic as to not seek to replace this bond with something else. For this reason, in the three final works, the artistic characters emphasise visual art over the written word, whether it be gymnastics, acting, or fashion, and are more concerned with feeling and sensation than with representation. There is, in this respect, a clear transformation toward Decadence.

Edmond de Goncourt's two final narratives take place in refined environments, but the final three novels describe characters desperately in search of novelty. This aesthetic disposition and its implicit link to the failure to reconcile art and life, betrays an ideology of despair. Koenraad Swart's remark that 'the only recourse open to the individual [in the contemporary world of the *fin-de-siècle*] was to escape into the world of art and beauty' nowhere rings more true.[1] In Edmond de Goncourt's solo novels, the thrills gained from effect far outweigh the joys of meaning. Insofar as this is the case, Naturalism, in these works, is superseded by a Decadent aesthetic born of a reinvention of the roles of the 'document humain' and 'écriture artiste'. There are clear distinctions between the joint *oeuvre* of the Goncourt brothers and the solo *oeuvre* of Edmond de Goncourt, which reinterprets Naturalism and is allied to larger modifications in the nineteenth-century literary field.

[1] *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 168.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Edmond de Goncourt - Novels

Goncourt, Edmond de, *La Fille Élisa*, ed. by Gérard Delaisement, (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1990 [1877]).

---, *Les Frères Zemganno*, ed. by Pierre-Jean Dufief (Geneva: Slatkine, 1996 [1879]).

---, *La Faustin*, ed. by J.-P. Bertrand (Arles: Actes Sud, 1995 [1882]).

---, *Chérie*, (Paris: Charpentier, 1884).

Edmond de Goncourt - Manuscripts

Goncourt, Edmond de, 'La Faustin I', Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, m.s.s., 14363, fol. 3.

Edmond de Goncourt - Other

Goncourt, Edmond de, '*La Fille Élisa* (fragment)… Alexandrine Phénomène', *La République des lettres. Revue littéraire et politique*, n.s. 2, 4, 18 March 1877.

---, '*La Faustin*', *Le Voltaire*, 1 November 1881-8 December 1881.

---, '*Chérie*', *Gil Blas*, 10 March 1884-17 April 1884.

---, 'Une préface', *Le Figaro*, 17 April 1884.

---, 'Une passionnette *de petite fille*', *La Revue indépendante*, 1 May 1884.

Goncourt Brothers

Goncourt, Edmond and Jules de, *La Révolution dans les moeurs* (Florence: Leo S. Olshki, 1989 [1854]).

---, *Les Actrices (Armande)*, ed. by Mireille Dottin-Orsini (Toulouse: Éditions Ombres, 2000 [1856]).

---, *Une voiture de masques*, ed. by Nadine Satiat (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1990 [1856]).

---, *Renée Mauperin*, ed. by Nadine Satiat (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1990 [1864]).

---, *Germinie Lacerteux*, ed. by Philippe Desan (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1990 [1865]).

---, *Madame Gervaisais*, ed. by Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Gallimard, 1982 [1869]).

---, *Journal: mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. by Robert Ricatte, 3 vols (Paris: Robert Laffont 'Bouquins', 1989 [1887-96]).

---, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, ed. by Hubert Juin (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980 [1888]).

---, *Oeuvres complètes*, 21 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, 1985-1986).

---, *Les Goncourt: oeuvres romanesques* (Paris: Bibliopolis, 1999) [cd-rom].

Correspondence - Printed

Cappello, Maria-Louisa, 'Louis Bouilhet et les Goncourt: relations épistolaires et littéraires (lettres inédites)', *Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 78-90.

Cogny, Pierre, ed., 'Edmond de Goncourt: lettres inédites à Émile Zola', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 5 (1959), 526-42.

Disegni, Silvia, 'Joseph Primoli et Edmond de Goncourt: lettres et textes inédits', *Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 5 (1997), 254-81.

---, 'Une correspondance Alexis - Goncourt', *Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 7 (1999-2000), 11-68.

Dufief, Pierre-Jean, 'Correspondance E. de Goncourt - Labille (inédit)', *Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 3 (1994), 91-103.

---, 'Correspondance Goncourt - Montesquiou', *Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 7 (1999-2000), 69-96.

Dufief, Pierre-Jean and Anne-Simone Dufief, eds, *Correspondance Edmond de Goncourt et Alphonse Daudet* (Geneva: Droz, 1996).

Goncourt, Edmond de and Henry Céard, *Correspondance inédite (1876-1896), suivie de Coups d'oeil et clins d'yeux (journal inédit, 1874-1875) de Henry Céard*, ed. by Colin Burns (Paris: Nizet, 1965).

Goncourt, Jules de, *Lettres* (Paris: Charpentier, 1885).

---, *Lettres de jeunesse inédites*, ed. by Alain Nicolas (Paris: PUF, 1981).

Huysmans, Joris-Karl, *Lettres inédites à Edmond de Goncourt*, ed. by Pierre Lambert and Pierre Cogny (Paris: Nizet, 1956).

Correspondence - Manuscript

Correspondance adressée aux Goncourt, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 22450-22479.

Other - Printed

Ajalbert, Jean, *La Fille Élisa: pièce en trois actes* (Paris: Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1910).

Bashkirtseff, Marie, *Le Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff (extraits)*, ed. by Verena van der Heyden-Rynsch (Paris: Mercure de France, 2000).

Champfleury, *Le Réalisme*, ed. by G. & J. Lacambre (Paris: Hermann, 1973).

Champfleury, Gautier, Nodier & Anonymes, *Pantomimes*, ed. by Isabelle Baugé (Paris [?]: Cicéro, 1995).

Daudet, Mme A., 'La Leçon de lecture', *La Vie moderne*, 17 June 1882.

---, 'L'Enfance d'une parisienne, fragments 1. - Le mensonge', *La Vie moderne*, 24 March 1883.

---, 'L'Enfance d'une parisienne, fragments 2. Départ', *La Vie moderne*, 7 April 1883.

---, 'L'Enfance d'une parisienne, fragments 3', *La Vie moderne*, 19 May 1883.

---, *Oeuvres de Madame A. Daudet 1878-1889, L'Enfance d'une parisienne; Enfants et mères* (Paris: Lemerre, 1892).

---, *Souvenirs autour d'un groupe littéraire* (Paris: Charpentier, 1910).

Dumas, Alexandre, *Filles, lorettes et courtisanes* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000 [1843]).

Flaubert, Gustave, *Madame Bovary* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1986 [1857]).

Huysmans, Joris-Karl, *À Rebours* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1978 [1884]).

Maupassant, Guy de, *Pierre et Jean*, ed. by G. Hainsworth (London: Harrap, 1966 [1888]).

Maupassant, Guy de and Marie Bashkirtseff, *Correspondance Guy de Maupassant-Marie Bashkirtseff*, ed. by Martine Reid (Arles: Actes Sud, 2000).

Proust, Marcel, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. by Jean-Yves Tadié, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard 'Pléiade', 1987-89 [1919-27]).

Other - Manuscript

Régnier, Marie de, 'Les Paons, April 189…', Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, m.s.s. 14363, fols 68-69.

Secondary Sources

Books and Articles

Abel, Gustave, 'Le Labeur des Goncourt', in *Mélanges Wilmotte* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1972), pp. 1-35.

Adorno, Theodor, *Notes sur la littérature*, trans. by Sibylle Muller (Paris: Flammarion, 1984).

Auerbach, Eric, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by William Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

Baguley, David, *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990).

---, 'The Nature of Naturalism' in *Naturalism in the European Novel. New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Brian Nelson (New York and Oxford: Berg, 1992), pp. 13-26.

Baju, Anatole, *L'Anarchie littéraire: les différentes écoles: les décadents, les symbolistes, les romaines, les instrumentistes, les magiques, les magnifiques, les anarchistes, les socialistes, etc.* (Paris: Librairie Léon Vanier, 1904).

Baldick, Robert, 'Huysmans and the Goncourts', *French Studies*, 6 (1952), 126-34.

---, 'The Survival of the Goncourts', *The Listener*, 21 July 1955, pp. 104-8.

Barrier, Robert, *Grand répertoire illustré des cirques en France: 1845-1995* (Autoedition, 1997).

Bart, Benjamin, 'World Views into Style: The Goncourt Brothers and Proust at the Opera', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 15 (1986-1987), 173-88.

Barthes, Roland, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1970).

Barthes, Roland *et al*, *Littérature et réalité* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1982).

Barthes, Roland, W. Kayser, *et al*, *Poétique du récit* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1977).

Bascelli, Anthony, 'Flaubert and the Brothers Goncourt', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 5 (1977), 277-95.

Baudelaire, Charles, *Critique d'art, suivi de Critique musicale*, ed. by Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

Bayle, Marie-Claude, *'Chérie', d'Edmond de Goncourt* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1983).

Becker, Colette, 'Les Goncourt, modèles de Zola?', *Francofonia*, 20 (1991), 105-13.

---, *Lire le réalisme et le naturalisme* (Paris: Dunod, 1992).

Belgrand, Anne, 'Zola "élève" des Goncourt: le thème de l'hystérie', *Francofonia*, 20 (1991), 115-31.

Bergerat, Émile, *Théophile Gautier, entretiens, souvenirs et correspondance* (Paris: Charpentier, 1879).

Beuchat, Charles, *Histoire du naturalisme français*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Corrêa, 1949).
Bever, Pierre van, 'Signification du "décadentisme"', *La Revue des langues vivantes*, 34 (1968), 366-72.

Bigne, Yolaine de la, *Valtesse de la Bigne ou le Pouvoir de la volupté* (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin, 1999).

Billy, André, *Les Frères Goncourt* (Paris: Flammarion, 1954).

Boase, Frederic, *Modern English Biography, containing many thousand memoirs of persons who have died between the years 1815-1900*, 6 vols (London: Frank Cass, 1965), 4.

Bouazis, Charles, ed., *Analyse de la périodisation littéraire* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1972).

Bouillier, Henry, *Portraits et mirroirs, études sur le portrait dans l'oeuvre de Retz, Saint-Simon, Chateubriand, Michelet, les Goncourt, Proust, Léon Daudet, Jouhandeau* (Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1979).

Bourdieu, Pierre, 'Champ de pouvoir, champ intellectuel et habitus de classe', *Scolies*, 1 (1971), 7-26.

---, *Les Règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

Bourget, Paul, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine: études littéraires*, ed. by André Guyaux (Paris: Gallimard, 1993 [1885-86]).

Bridgeman, Teresa, *Negociating the New in the French Novel. Building Contexts for Fictional Worlds* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

Brunetière, Ferdinand, *Le Roman naturaliste* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1892).

Brunot, Ferdinand, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), 13: Charles Bruneau, *L'Époque réaliste, deuxième partie: la prose littéraire*.

Burns, Colin, 'Documentation et imagination chez Emile Zola', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 24-25 (1963), 69-78.

Bury, Marianne, 'Réalisme et préciosité chez les Goncourt', *Francofonia*, 21 (1991), 43-58.

Butler, Ronnie, 'Les Goncourt admirateurs de Balzac', *L'Année balzacienne*, 8 (1987), 345-61.

Cabanès, Jean-Louis, *Le Corps et la maladie dans les récits réalistes (1856-1893)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991).

---, 'Les Goncourt et la morbidité: catégorie esthétique de *L'Art du XVIIIe siècle*', *Romantisme: revue du dix-neuvième*, 71 (1991), 93-100.

---, ed., *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture* (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997).

---, ed., 'Les Frères Goncourt', *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 259 (2000).

Caffier, Michel, *Les Frères Goncourt: un deshabillé de l'âme* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1994).

Les Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, 1-7 (1992-2000).

Calinescu, Matei, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

Caramaschi, Enzo, *Réalisme et impressionnisme dans l'oeuvre des frères Goncourt* (Pisa: Editrice Libreria Goliardica, 1971).

Carter, A.E., *The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, 1830-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958).

Castex, P.-G. *et al*, eds, 'L'Univers de *La Comédie humaine*' in *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard 'Pléiade', 1976-1981), 1, pp. ix-xix.

Charle, Christophe, *La Crise littéraire à l'époque du naturalisme: roman, théâtre et politique; essai d'histoire sociale des groupes et genres littéraires* (Paris: Presses de l'École normale supérieure, 1979).

Christin, A.-M., 'Matière et idéale dans *Manette Salomon*', *La Revue d'histoire littéraire de France*, 80 (1980), 921-48.

Citti, Pierre, *Contre la décadence: histoire de l'imagination française dans le roman 1890-1914* (Paris: PUF, 1987).

---, ed., *Fins de siècle: Colloque de Tours 4-6 juin 1985* (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1990).

Citti, Pierre and M. Détrie, eds, *Le Champ littéraire* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1992).

Collister, Peter, 'Marie Bashkirtseff in Fiction: Edmond de Goncourt and Mrs. Humphrey Ward', *Modern Philology*, 82 (1984-85), 53-69.

Compagnon, Antoine, 'Zola dans la décadence', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 67 (1993), 211-22.

Conroy, Mark, *Modernism and Authority: Strategies of Legitimation in Flaubert and Conrad* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

Cressot, Michel, *La Phrase et le vocabulaire de J.-K. Huysmans: contribution à l'histoire de la langue française pendant le dernier quart du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Droz, 1938).

Debray-Genette, R. and J. Neefs, eds, *Romans d'archives* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1987).

Décaudin, Michel, 'Définir la décadence', in *L'Esprit de décadence I: colloque de Nantes* (Paris: Minard, 1980), pp. 5-12.

Deffoux, Léon, *Le Naturalisme, avec un florilège des principaux écrivains naturalistes* (n.p.: n.pub., 1929).

Delzant, Alidor, *Bibliothèque des Goncourt: XVIIIe siècle. Vente à Paris, hôtel Drouot, 5-10 avril, 1897* (Paris: Imprimerie de Motteroz, n.d.).

---, *Bibliothèque des Goncourt: livres modernes. Vente à Paris, hôtel Drouot, 5-10 avril, 1897* (Paris: Imprimerie de Motteroz, n.d.).

---, *Les Goncourt* (Paris: Charpentier, 1889).

Denis, Dominique, *Dictionnaire illustré des mots et locutions du Cirque en trois volumes* (Paris: Arts des deux mondes, 1997).

Derrida, Jacques, *Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

---, *Acts of Literature*, ed. by D. Attridge (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

Desprez, Louis, *L'Évolution naturaliste* (Paris: Tresse, 1884).

Didier, Béatrice, *Journal intime* (Paris: PUF, 1976).

Dolan, Thérèse, 'Musée Goncourt: *Manette Salomon* and the Nude', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 18 (1989-1990), 172-85.

Duchet, C., '*La Fille abandonnée* et *La Bête humaine*, éléments de titrologie romanesque', *Littérature*, 12 (1973), 49-73.

Dufief, Pierre-Jean, 'Edmond de Goncourt et son cercle de "petits" naturalistes', in *Relecture des 'petits' naturalistes*, ed. by Colette Becker and Anne-Simone Dufief (Paris: RITM Université de Paris X, 2000), pp. 21-33.

Dumesnil, René, *L'Époque réaliste et naturaliste* (Paris: Jules Tallandier, 1945).

Dupriez, Bernard, *Gradus: les procédés littéraires* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1984).

Duquette, Jean-Pierre, *Flaubert, ou l'architecture du vide* (Montréal: Presses de l'université de Montréal, 1972).

Durrer, Sylvie, *Le Dialogue romanesque. Style et structure* (Geneva: Droz, 1994).

'Écrire à l'écrivain', *Textuel*, 27 (1994).

Edwards, Peter, 'Lieux de pouvoir, pouvoir des lieux: images de la ville chez les Goncourt', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 30 (1993), 214-21.

Falconer, Graham, 'Genetic Criticism', *Comparative Literature*, 45 (1993), 1-19.

Fayolle, Roger, 'D'une histoire littéraire à l'histoire des littératures', *Scolies*, 2 (1972), 7-25.

Fosca , François, *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941).

Fowler, Alistair, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982).

Francofonia, 19-21 (1990-1991).

François, Alexis, *Histoire de la langue française cultivée des origines à nos jours* (Geneva: Alexandre Jullien, 1959).

'Les Frères Goncourt: le journal d'un demi-siècle', *Magazine littéraire*, 269 (1989).

Freud, Sigmund, *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995).

Frost, Thomas, *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875).

Fuchs, Maximilien, *Le Lexique du 'Journal des Goncourt': contribution à l'histoire de la langue française pendant la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle* (Paris: É. Cornély, 1912).

Gautier, Théophile, *Portraits contemporains* (Paris: Charpentier, 1886).

---, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans: deuxième série* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1968).

Genette, Gérard, *Figures I* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1966).

---, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

---, 'Le Journal, l'anti-journal', *Poétique*, 47 (1981), 315-22.

---, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1982).

---, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

Genette, Gérard, and Tzetvan Todorov, eds, *Théorie des genres* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1986).

Gershman, Herbert S. and Kerman B. Whitworth, Jr., *Anthologie des préfaces de romans français du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions 1972).

Gold, Arthur, and Robert Fizdale, *The Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

Gothot-Mersch, Claudine, 'Le Dialogue dans l'oeuvre de Flaubert', *Europe*, 485-487 (1969), 112-21.

Gourmont, Rémy de, *Le Deuxième livre des masques* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1917).

---, *La Culture des idées* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1983).

Greaves, Anthony, 'Zola et l'esprit décadent', in *L'Esprit de décadence I: colloque de Nantes* (Paris: Minard, 1980), pp. 89-98.

Grivel, Charles, *Production de l'intérêt romanesque: un état du texte (1870-1880), un essai de constitution de sa théorie* (Paris: Mouton, 1973).

Guibert, Noëlle, *Portrait(s) de Sarah Bernhardt* (Paris: BNF, 2000).

Hamon, Philippe, *Du Descriptif* (Paris: Hachette, 1993).

Hardy, Alain, 'Un secret des Goncourt?', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 41 (1971), 81-95.

Harkness, Nigel, 'Gendered Discourse: Narrative Voices in the Novels of George Sand' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Edinburgh University, 1997).

Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood, eds, *Art in Theory, 1815-1900* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

Hélin, Maurice, 'Les Livres et leurs titres', *Marche romane*, 6-3/4 (1956), 139-46.

Hollander, John, *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form* (Oxford: OUP, 1975).

Hotier, Hugues, 'Le Vocabulaire du cirque et du music-hall en France' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Lille, 1972).

Humblot, Alfred, *L'Édition littéraire au XIXe siècle, conférence faite par M. Alfred Humblot, le 3 mars 1911, à l'Ecole des hautes études sociales.* (Évreux: P. Hérissey, n.d.).

Huret, Jules, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (Paris: Charpentier, 1891).

---, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (Paris: José Corti, 1999).

Issacharoff, Michael, *J.-K. Huysmans devant la critique en France (1874-1960)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970).

Jakobson, Roman, 'Linguistics and Poetics', in *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1994).

Jesse, John Heneage, *Memoirs of Celebrated Etonians: including Henry Fielding, the Earl of Chatham, Horne Tooke, Horace Walpole, George Grenville, Thomas Gray, George Selwyn, Lord North, Earl of Bute, Earl Temple, etc.*, 2 vols (London: R. Bentley, 1875).

Jones, Louisa, *Sad Clowns and Pale Pierrots: Literature and the Popular Comic Arts in 19th-Century France* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, 1984).

Kristeva, Julia, *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1980).

Lejeune, Philippe, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

Lemaître, Jules, *Les Contemporains: études et portraits littéraires (troisième série)* (Paris: Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie, n.d.).

Letourneau, Charles, *Physiologies des passions* (Paris: Reinwald, 1878).

Levaillant, Jean, 'Flaubert et la matière', *Europe*, 485-87 (1969), 202-9.

Levin, Harry, 'The Title as Literary Genre', *Modern Language Review*, 72 (1977), xxiii-xxxvi.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962).

Lloyd, Christopher, *J.-K. Huysmans and the Fin-de-Siècle Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990).

Lloyd, Rosemary, *The Land of Lost Content: Children and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

Macovski, Michael, *Dialogue and Literature. Apostrophe, Auditors and the Collapse of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford: OUP, 1994).

Marcussen, M. and H. Olrik, 'Le Réel chez Zola et les peintres impressionnistes: perception et représentation', *La Revue d'histoire littéraire de France*, 80-6 (1980), 965-77.

Marquèze-Pouey, Louis, *Le Mouvement décadent en France* (Paris: PUF, 1986).

Martel, Jacinthe, and Alain Carbonneau, eds, 'Les Leçons du manuscrit: questions de génétique textuelle', *Études françaises*, 28-1 (1992).

Martino, Pierre, *Le Roman réaliste sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Hachette, 1913).

May, Georges, *L'Autobiographie* (Paris: PUF, 1984).

Mirecourt, Eugène de, *Rachel* (Paris: Havard, 1857).

Mitterand, Henri, 'Programme et préconstruit génétiques: le dossier de *l'Assommoir*', in *Essais de critique génétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), pp. 195-226.

---, *Le Discours du roman* (Paris: PUF, 1980).

---, *Le Regard et le signe* (Paris: PUF, 1987).

---, *L'Illusion réaliste de Balzac à Aragon* (Paris: PUF, 1994).

Moncelet, Christian, *Essai sur le titre en littérature et dans les arts* (Paris: BOF, 1972).

Moréas, Jean, *Les Premières armes du symbolisme*, ed. by Michael Pakenham (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1973).

Moreel, Camille, *1880 à travers la presse: dialogues et démocratie* (Paris: Harmattan, 1998).

Mounoud-Anglés, Christiane, *Balzac et ses lectrices: l'affaire du courrier des lectrices de Balzac, auteur/lecteur: l'invention réciproque* (Paris: Indigo & Côté-Femmes, 1994).

Mylne, Vivienne, *Le Dialogue dans le roman français de Sorel à Sarraute*, ed. by Françoise Tilkin (Paris: Universitas, 1994).

Newton, Joy and Monique Fol, 'Robert de Montesquiou et Edmond de Goncourt: une amitié littéraire', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 7-1/2 (1978-1979), 85-103.

Nordau, Max, *Degeneration* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

O'Donovan, Patrick, 'Avatars of the Artist: Narrative Approaches to the Work of the Painter', in *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. by Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 222-36.

Paglia, Camille, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London : Yale University Press, 1990).

Palacio, Jean de, 'La Publication des romans de Léon Cladel (quelques lettres inédites d'Emile Bergerat, Goncourt et Huysmans)', *Studi Francesi*, (1991), 461-7.

---, *Figures et formes de la décadence* (Paris: Séguier, 1994).

Petit de Julleville, L., *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, 8 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1899), 3: *Dix-neuvième siècle, période contemporaine (1850-1900)*.

Pierrot, Jean, *The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900*, trans. by Derek Coltman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

Ponnau, Gwenhaël, ed., *Fins de siècle: terme-évolution-révolution? Actes du congrès de la société française de littérature générale et comparée, Toulouse 22-24 septembre 1987* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1989).

Prajs, Lazare, *La Fallacité dans l'oeuvre romanesque des frères Goncourt* (Paris: Nizet, 1974).

Praz, Mario, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. by Angus Davidson (London: OUP, 1970).

Prendergast, Christopher, *The Order of Mimesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986).

Proust, Marcel, 'Les Goncourt devant leurs cadets' in *Contre Sainte-Beuve, Pastiches et mélanges, Essais et articles*, ed. by Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard 'Pléiade', 1971), pp. 641-3.

Pykett, Lyn, ed., *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions* (London and New York: Longman, 1996).

Raimond, Michel, *La Crise du roman des lendemains du naturalisme aux années vingt* (Paris: José Corti, 1966).

Ricatte, Robert, 'Autour de *La Fille Élisa*', *La Revue d'histoire littéraire de France*, 48-1 (1948), 69-83.

--- *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt, 1851-1870* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953).

--- *La Genèse de 'La Fille Élisa'* (Paris: PUF, 1960).

Richard, Jean-Pierre, *Littérature et sensation: Stendhal, Flaubert* (Paris: Seuil 'Points', 1954), pp. 299-321.

Sabatier, Pierre, *'Germinie Lacerteux' des Goncourt* (Paris: S.F.E.L.T., 1948).

--- *L'Esthétique des Goncourt* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970).

Saint-Amand, Pierre, 'La Passion de l'éphémère: les Goncourt et la mode', *L'Esprit créateur*, 37 (1997), 21-33.

Sauvage, Marcel, *Jules et Edmond de Goncourt: précurseurs* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1970).

Schmid, Marion, *Processes of Literary Creation* (Oxford: Legenda, 1998).

Schmid, Marion, 'From Decadence to Health: Zola's *Paris*', *Romance Studies*, 18-2 (2000), 99-111.

Simon-Bacchi, Catherine, *Sarah Bernhardt: mythe et réalité* (Paris: Presses universitaires de la S.E.D.A.G., 1984).

Smith, James, 'Concepts of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century French Literature', *Studies in Philology*, 50 (1953), 640-51.

Stephan, Philip, *Paul Verlaine and the Decadence 1882-1890* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974).

Spackman, Barbara, *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1989).

Starobinski, Jean, *Portrait de l'artiste en saltimbanque* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970).

Swart, Koenraad, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964).

Tadié, Jean-Yves, *Introduction à la vie littéraire du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Bordas, 1970).

Taine, Hippolyte, *Philosophie de l'art*, ed. by J.-F. Ravel (Paris: Hermann, 1964).

Thorel, Sylvie, 'Naturalisme, naturaliste', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 60 (1986), 76-88.

Thorel-Cailleteau, Sylvie, *La Tentation du livre sur rien: naturalisme et décadence* (Mont-de-Marsan: Éditions interuniversitaires, 1994).

Todorov, Tzvetan, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction' in *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London and New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 158-65.

Toussaint du Wast, Nicole, *Rachel, amours et tragédie* (Paris: Stock, 1980).

Ullmann, Stephen, *Style in the French Novel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1957).

Via, Sara, 'Une Phèdre décadente chez les naturalistes', 'Aspects du décadentisme européen. Fictions du XVIIIe siècle', ed. by Jean de Palacio, *La Revue des sciences humaines*, 153 (1974), 29-38.

Vouilloux, Bernard, *L'Art des Goncourt: une esthétique du style* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

Weir, David, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

Wilson, Sonia, 'Making an Exhibition of Oneself in Public: Marie Bashkirtseff's *Journal intime*', *French Studies*, 55-4 (2001), 485-97.

Youngs, Michael, 'The Style of the Goncourts in their Novels: Vocabulary and Imagery' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1964).

Zola, Émile, *Du Roman: sur Stendhal, Flaubert et les Goncourt*, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Brussels: Complexe, 1989).

Zulli, Floyd, 'Edmond de Goncourt's American Equestrienne', *French American Review*, 3 (1978-1979), 53-6.

Periodicals - Nineteenth Century

Barbey D'Aurevilly, Jules, 'Littérature: *La Femme au XVIIIe siècle* (nouvelle édition)', *Le Constitutionnel*, 25 May 1877.

---, 'Littérature: *La Faustin*', *Le Constitutionnel*, 27 February 1882.

Bienvenu, Léon, 'Le Dossier de *La Fille Élisabeth*', *Le Tintamarre*, 20 May 1877.

---, 'Le Dossier de *La Fille Élisabeth*', *Le Tintamarre*, 27 May 1877.

Bigot, Charles, 'L'Esthétique naturaliste', *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15 September 1879.

Bourget, Paul, 'Études et portraits: profil d'une jeune fille', *Le Journal des débats*, 4 May 1884.

Brévannes, '*La Fille Élisabeth*. Un chapitre du roman de l'année prochaine', *Le Tintamarre*, 1 April 1877.

---, '*La Fille Élisabeth*', *Le Tintamarre*, 29 April 1877.

---, 'Les Droits de la satire', *Le Tintamarre*, 6 May 1877.

Cabanès, Dr., 'La Documentation médicale dans le roman des Goncourt', *La Chronique médicale*, 1 August 1896.

---, 'Journal médical des Goncourt', *Le Journal de médecine de Paris*, 22 March 1891.

Céard, Henri, '*La Faustin*, par Edmond de Goncourt', *La Vie moderne*, 28 January 1882.

Colani, M.T., 'Quinzaine littéraire: *La Fille Élisa*, de M. E. de Goncourt', *Le Courrier littéraire*, 25 March 1877.

Doumic, René, 'Revue littéraire: M. Edmond de Goncourt', *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15 August 1896.

Dupuy, Charles, 'Les Goncourt et la légende', *La Gazette de France*, 19 July 1896.

Duval, Georges,'Le Roman nouveau', *L'Evénement*, 22 April 1884.

Enne, François, 'Au hasard, la préface de *Chérie*', *La Nation*, 27 April 1884.

Geffroy, Gustave, 'Les Livres: *La Faustin*', *La Justice*, 21 March 1882.

---, 'Notes d'un journaliste: Edmond de Goncourt', *La Nation*, 21 April 1884.

---, 'Revue littéraire: Edmond de Goncourt', *La Justice*, 2 February 1885.

---, 'Revue littéraire: les Goncourt', *La Justice*, 10 November 1884.

Ghil, René, 'Notre école', *La Décadence*, 1-1, 1 October 1886.

Hennequin, Emile, 'Les Romans de M. Edm. de Goncourt', *La Revue indépendante*, 1 May 1884.

Ignotus, 'Goncourt', *Le Figaro*, 4 March 1885.

Levallois, J., 'Causerie littéraire', *Le Télégraphe*, 28 April 1884.

Maupassant, Guy de, 'L'Adultère', *Le Gaulois*, 23 January 1882.

---, 'Les Femmes de théâtre', *Le Gaulois*, 1 February 1882.

---, 'La Jeune fille', *Le Gaulois*, 27 April 1884.

Maurras, Charles, 'Chronique: front de taureau', *La Gazette de France*, 25 July 1896.

Pigeon, Amédée, 'Études: le roman réaliste', *Le Courrier littéraire*, 10 April 1877.

Pontmartin, Armand de, 'Semaines littéraires DLXXIII: M. Edmond de Goncourt, *Les Frères Zemganno*', *La Gazette de France*, 11 May 1879.

Quidam, 'Les Goncourts', *Le Figaro*, 25 April 1884.

Richepin, Jean, 'Autour de *La Faustin*', *Gil Blas*, 1 February 1882.

Tarbé, Edmond '*La Fille Élisa*', *Le Gaulois*, 26 March 1877.

Wolff, Albert, 'Gazette de Paris', *Le Figaro*, 28 April 1877.

Zola, Émile, 'Edmond de Goncourt', *Le Figaro*, 15 March 1881.

---, 'Revue dramatique et littéraire', *Le Voltaire*, 25 March 1879.

'Les Goncourt', *Le Figaro*, 25 April 1884.

'Goncourt sur les barricades', *La Justice*, 10 November 1884.

Le Décadent, n.s. 3, 2-7, 1 January 1888-31 March 1888.

Le Décadent, n.s. 4, 26-27, 1 January 1889-30 January 1889 (Especially, Ernest Reynaud, 'Les Frères Goncourt', pp. 5-9).

Le Décadent, n.s. 4, 29 (15-28 February 1889).

'*La Faustin*', *Le Gaulois (du dimanche)*, 22 January 1882.

'Mort d'Edmond de Goncourt', *La Gazette de France*, 17 July 1896.

'Chronique: mort d'Edmond de Goncourt', *La Gazette de France*, 18 July 1896.

'Les Chroniques: pétition de M. Edmond de Goncourt', *Le Siècle*, 23 December 1888.

Internet

Barbier Sainte-Marie, Alain and Paule Adamy, *Messieurs de Goncourt*, http://goncourt.multimania.com.